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Music, Dance, and Family Ties:
Ghanaian and Senegalese Immigrants in Los Angeles

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Music, Dance, and Family Ties:
Ghanaian and Senegalese Immigrants in Los Angeles

by

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated

with love and deep gratitude

to Ben Davis

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This ethnography explores the music and dance performance practices during lifecycle rituals such as baby naming ceremonies, weddings, and funerals among first-generation Ghanaian and Senegalese immigrants in Los Angeles. By comparing the musical performance practices of two West African diasporic communities from different countries, Ghana and Senegal, in a global city, Los Angeles, the ethnography demonstrates that a singular African immigrant Diaspora is difficult to locate or define. My results detail the different kinds of transnationality that different immigrant groups create and experience based on their interactions with the host society, their cultural expressions of particular genres of locally identifiable music and dance, and their mediations with their home societies. In listening and dancing to particular, meaningful musical genres from their home

areas, West African immigrants index local cultural identities and form boundaries of exclusion around like-identified communities.

Themes of dislocation, disrupted kinship networks, and the transformative power of music and dance in ritual contexts have fueled my inquiry in developing a comparative analysis of African transnational immigrant performance and identity politics. The ethnographic analysis of the music and dance during lifecycle rituals among immigrants is imagined along two axes of comparison. The first axis concerns the differences between lifecycle rituals performed in Africa and lifecycle rituals performed by African immigrants in America. The second axis of comparison concerns the differences and similarities between Ghanaian and Senegalese musical performance practices.

The transnational character of family rituals is maintained through three main channels – through the flow of remittances from immigrants to their families back home to fund family celebrations, through the performance of family lifecycle rituals through which music and dance re-inscribe ethnic, national, religious, and kinship-based identity, and through the circulation of videotaped media of family ceremonies, which help increase the status and prestige of extended families. Through these three channels, the members of these transnational communities stay connected with their families in agentive ways. They reassert family relationships, while they also compromise, adapt, and transpose their performances in ways that signify a new phase of African presence around the world.

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Chapter One

Introduction

"To the majority of African immigrants, the journey to America is a family's investment in its future," John Arthur 2000.

A New African Presence around the World

This ethnography focuses on the journey from the west coast of Africa to the west coast of California. Africans, like many other immigrants in America's past and present, have come to this country to manifest their dreams of success and to escape certain limiting conditions in their countries of origin. Among Africans, these conditions have included states of economic decline, political corruption, global economic restructuring, interethnic violence, religious persecution, and marginal education and employment opportunities. And like many other immigrants in the current phase of transnational immigration, which is articulated through myriad flows and circulations (Glick Schiller, et al. 1992a, 1992b, 1995, Basch, et al. 1994), Africans who migrate do not regard themselves as singular individuals branching out to find success in America. Rather, their success or failure represents the success or failure of an extended family (Arthur 2000). Belonging to kinship structured societies, West Africans are held in a web of interdependent familial relationships, which structure their identities

along various levels, including religious, ethnic, national, gender, age-group, and in some cases, social caste. The kinship social structure also mandates particular social responsibilities, rights, and obligations that follow a person through every stage of the lifecycle and even beyond death.[1]

This ethnography explores the music and dance performance practices during lifecycle rituals such as baby naming ceremonies, weddings, and funerals among Ghanaian and Senegalese immigrants in Los Angeles. Lifecycle ceremonies are sites for ritually and performatively signifying the transformation of an individual from one socially oriented status to another, along the cycle of life, from birth to puberty to marriage to death (and onward towards reincarnation, for many groups) (Van Gennep 1960). Music and dances during lifecycle ceremonies are often used to mediate between spiritual and physical realms of experience, since lifecycle transitions are, in many ways, regarded as both spiritual and social transitions. When West African immigrants reproduce family ceremonies in the Diaspora, their performances of music and dance traverse not only the spiritual and social realms, but are also powerful channels for mediating kinship-based identities and actively linking transmigrants with their families and kin groups back home. Because music and dance permeate Africans' lives in profound ways in both everyday and ritual practice, it is important to consider the role that music and dance play in the identity politics of African immigrants in this current phase of transmigration.

By comparing the musical performance practices of two West African diasporic communities from different countries, Ghana and Senegal, in a global city, Los Angeles, the

[1] See Jonathan Friedman 1994 for a comparison of kinship-based societies versus capitalist societies.

ethnography demonstrates that a singular African immigrant Diaspora is difficult to locate or define. My results detail the very different kinds of transnationality that different groups create and experience (Grillo, et al. 1999) based on their interactions with the host society, their cultural expressions of particular genres of locally identifiable music and dance, and their mediations with their home societies. In listening and dancing to particular, meaningful musical genres from their home areas, especially gospel and highlife among Ghanaians and *mbalax* and *sabar* among Senegalese, and by reproducing quintessential African performance practices such as forming circles for dancing and for praying, African immigrants index local cultural identities and form boundaries of exclusion around like-identified communities. At the same time, immigrants reformulate and transform their local identities in relation to the global context.

With the far and wide transmigration of Africans during the past few decades, family ceremonies such as baptisms, weddings, and funerals have become decidedly transnational and multi-sited. Rituals and celebrations are often performed in dual or multiple locations in Africa and abroad. The ethnography describes the balancing act that African immigrants perform for staking claims both "here" and "home," by both adapting and resisting assimilation to the host culture. On one hand, immigrants adapt their rituals and celebrations to the constraints and limitations of the foreign surroundings, making subtle or significant changes to the rituals. On the other hand, they Africanize the landscape and soundscape of their surroundings to ensure ritual efficacy, in both religious and cultural terms. Their strategies of ingenuity and creative adaptation are reflective of the new transnational presence of Africans around the world.

A growing interest in the music and identity politics of immigrant and refugee communities is evident in the slow, but steady increase in ethnographies by ethnomusicologists and anthropologists in the 1990s and 2000s. In these ethnographies, scholars have done rich local case studies that analyze the music and identity politics of a particular national, multi-national, or ethnic group in North America. The body of work has focused attention on first-generation, second-generation, refugee, and other diasporic communities from many different cultural areas, including Mexico and Mexican America (Simonett 2001, Ragland 2000, Loza 1993), India and Pakistan (Werbner 2002, Gopinath 1995), the Caribbean (McAlister 2002, Averill 1997), Asia and Asian America (Wong 2004, Reyes 1999, Lum 1996, Zheng 1993), the Middle East and Arab America (Rasmussen 1997), Eastern Europe (Sugarman 1997), and the Jewish Diaspora (Slobin 1996). With this dissertation, I hope to generate more interest towards African immigrant music cultures and add an important component to this body of scholarship.

These ethnographies exhibit a diversity of approaches and concerns towards immigrant groups and music. Most ethnomusicologists have developed analyses which take into consideration the unique circumstances and social histories of the particular immigrant group in order to understand how their music production and performance shape the immigrants' social behavior, identities, and lived experience in spheres of displacement.

In Mexican migrant studies, the concept of the "border" has been a central concern as an analytical tool and a ubiquitous theme in people's consciousness. As Gloria Anzaldúa expressed in *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987), the borderlands is a conceptual sphere with myriad psychological, racial, sexual, class, and other contradictions in

close and uneasy proximity, contradictions which, among migrants, are equally apparent in the physical, social realm and the inner realms of the Self. This is true even with migrants as far away as New York City, as Cathy Ragland shows in her ethnography of *sonideros*, or Mexican DJs, in New York's club scene (2000). Ragland shows how the sonideros structure the musical event of the *bailes* through songs and salutations which mediate between the displaced youth in New York with friends and relatives around the U.S. and in specific Mexican cities and towns.

In the edited collection, *Musics of Multicultural America: A Study of Twelve Musical Communities*, Anne Rasmussen (1997) looks at Arab American communities in Detroit as a heterogeneous group which is diverse and multicultural along several parameters including nationality, generation, religious orientation, and regional provenience. Rasmussen's comparative ethnographic approach of three wedding celebrations by different Arab cultural groups (Yemeni, Lebanese, and Iraqi) in Detroit foregrounds the groups' differences as well as their similarities. Her work focuses on a number of issues including the role of music in structuring ritual events, the role of individual artists in constructing community through performance, musical patronage as an influence on the musical life of a community, the role of recordings and other media in diasporic groups, and the importance of a community's history in constructing identity.

Jane Sugarman focuses on "the dialectic between singing and subjectivity" (1997:3-4) in her extensive, multi-sited ethnography of singing in Prespa Albanian weddings in Prespa and the diaspora. Her theoretical approach begins with a Geertzian interpretive paradigm which views musical performance as a "text" to be read and interpreted by the ethnographer.

Next, she applies the practice theory of Bourdieu and the notion of power by Foucault to ground the community's activities and subjectivities in the structures and constraints of the social, cultural surroundings. Since Bourdieu's notion of "habitus" as an embodiment of habitual behavior offers little in the way of transformation, she counterbalances the theory with Foucault's concept of "discourses" through which social relationships between people and institutions always emerge through contestation and power struggles. Third, Sugarman approaches gender as a central, critical theme in her analysis of singing and identity construction.

Adelaida Reyes, in her groundbreaking work, *Songs of the Caged, Songs of the Free* (1999), proposes that an ethnographic study of refugee communities requires a new methodology that considers forced migration as a significant factor in refugees' experiences, in stark and necessary contrast to voluntary migrants. Two points stand out in her configuration of forced migration as an analytical framework. One is that the intense emotions, fears, and traumas experienced by refugees can be mitigated through musical expression in ways that verbal communication fails to appease. Another is that sometimes seemingly contradictory or irrational perceptions by culture bearers of their music or musical performances are often more significant to musical meaning than the so-called factual information about the music.

As the impact of globalization becomes increasingly apparent in the world economy and cultural production, ethnomusicologists should continue to develop methodologies which differentiate the specific histories and identities of diasporic communities according to the unique circumstances and strategies of groups such as first-generation, second-generation,

and refugee communities. We should also keep in mind the fluid boundaries around not only communities, but of individuals, many of whom have hyphenated identities. Musical ethnographies of immigrants should see music and dance as springboards to better understand the transnational connections between people, families, and communities, and interpret the role of music and dance as social practice in shaping identities and behavior interdependently in both the host and home societies.

Research Questions

My primary research is based on a comparative ethnography of first-generation Ghanaian and Senegalese immigrants in Southern California, as they make critical performance choices in family lifecycle rituals such as baby naming ceremonies, weddings, and funerals. These groups – as well as other West Africans from Nigeria, Cameroon, Sierra Leone, and Côte d'Ivoire – have been forming vibrant transnational communities in the United States for decades. While there is a growing literature on the Mouride trade Diaspora (Cheikh Babou 2001, Wendy Wilson Fall 2000, Beth Buggenhagen 2003, Allen F. Roberts and Mary Nooter Roberts 2003, Victoria Ebin 1996, Mamadou Diouf 2000, Papa Demba Fall 2000, Paul Stoller 2002, 1996, and D. Perry 1997) and on various economic, social, and religious issues among Ghanaian immigrant communities (Marleen De Witte 2003, 2001, Agyemang Attah-Poku 1996, T. Manuh 1998, Margaret Piel 1995, Yaw Adutwum forthcoming, Mazzucato, et al. 2004, and David Machacek 2003), the music and dance practices of these and other West African immigrants have been largely unexplored in ethnomusicology and anthropology.

Of the three main reasons that Africans immigrate to the U.S. – education, business, and asylum – Ghanaians generally belong to the first category, and Senegalese to the second. Ghanaians have emigrated to the U.S. since the late 1960s, mostly to attain higher education and professional jobs in an attempt to raise the economic and social status of their extended families. Senegalese have only recently made the U.S. a destination, since the 1980s, to expand trade networks (especially Mourides) and to raise the status of their extended families. Ghanaian and Senegalese immigrants, who are in many ways living "between" and in "both" African and American societies, formulate their identities as transnational subjects through a variety of media and social practices. The ethnography will demonstrate that people's choices of music and dance (or the lack thereof) during rituals and celebrations link families cyclically across the Diaspora by accentuating the family ties across the Atlantic.

African immigrants deal with the challenges of both racial exclusion and anti-immigrant policies and sentiment in the host American society. How does this play out in people's musical performance in ceremonial contexts? On one hand, Ghanaian and Senegalese immigrants expressly resist assimilating to the host society, so their identity construction during performance is partly leveled at asserting difference in opposition to a multicultural foreign context, in which they are identified as being black and foreign. On the other hand, immigrants also adapt their performances to the foreign surroundings, in the absence of the original cultural complex, the material cultural items, and the appropriate music practitioners.

One adaptation includes loosening the requirements on the performance of traditional genres of ritual or celebratory music in favor of recorded popular music from their home

countries. The most apparent reason for this is that popular recordings are more readily available than live musicians versed in traditional ritual music. A preference for recorded popular music also signifies an attraction to building identities based on cosmopolitan, modern, western sensibilities while still remaining within the boundaries of their own cultures' popular music and identity. In performance, Ghanaians tend to formulate their identities through a nostalgic appreciation of the popular music from their younger days. On the other hand, nostalgia for a *traditional* musical past sometimes competes with class interests in Ghanaians' identity negotiations. One Ghanaian drummer expressed anxiety over the fact that Ghanaians in California perform "tuxedo functions," alluding to the elite middle-class ceremonies, rather than incorporating traditional drum and dance music. Senegalese, on the other hand, tend to build their identities on their knowledge and mastery of the latest musical hits, the newest dance styles, and most popular clothing trends. Immigrants, who are cut off from the constant influx of new music, dance, and style trends, are often teased or ostracized by visiting Senegalese. Thus, being disjoined from society's popular music machine, Senegalese immigrants are sometimes left in the margins of the style race.

The popular music styles which Ghanaians and Senegalese favor at lifecycle ceremonies are highlife and gospel among Ghanaians and mbalax among Senegalese. These genres themselves are immersed in long histories of hybridization, negotiation, change, and appropriation between West African and western cultures. Highlife, gospel, and mbalax are hybrid genres that index a complexity of issues and strategies by musicians and audiences who are in a constant dialogue with western musical forms and sensibilities. One issue includes the appropriation of African American and Afro-Caribbean musical forms,

instrumentation, and styles by Ghanaian and Senegalese musicians, which reflects the ongoing dialogue between West African musicians and western sources. Second, these genres are each situated in local histories of national political projects of modernization and nationalism. Third, by performing highlife and mbalax, people not only assert modern, cosmopolitan values and identities, but they also assert traditional, local identities and social ideologies which are reflected in the rhythms on which the genres are based and in the lyrical expressions which often express traditional, moral themes regarding proper social behavior.

These genres further complicate the notion of popular music (at least in western terms) by fusing popular styles with religious themes and sentiments. Many mbalax songs, for example, are written with Islamic themes, particularly in terms of local Sufi sentiments. Youssou N'dour, the father of mbalax and a practicing Mouride, devoted his entire last album to praising Allah and the Sufi saints of Senegal (*Sant Allah* 2003, *Egypt* 2004).[2] Likewise, highlife music of Ghana has been deeply influenced by the evangelical Christian movement in that country since the 1970s. During a time of political and social upheaval, with strict limitations placed on musicians in the 1970s, the holiness churches allowed musicians a place to perform and record (John Collins 2000b). From this situation emerged a new genre, gospel highlife, a simple upbeat form of highlife that is synthesizer-heavy, built on soca- or rhumba-inspired syncopated rhythms. Gospel highlife facilitates participation through simple, repetitive, call and response text in a strophic form, and foregrounds Christian-based lyrics

[2] Recorded in 1999 in Cairo and Dakar, the album was intended as a personal exploration of faith and an hommage to diversity in religious practices. But, after the terror attacks of September 11, 2001 coincided with its release date, N'dour delayed the release. In 2004, the album was released in Africa with the title, *Sant Allah*. But, Nonesuch released the same album in the western market under the title *Egypt* in an attempt to soften the overtly Islamic tones.

about Jesus, Mary, and God. Therefore, when Ghanaians and Senegalese perform and participate in popular musics such as highlife, gospel, and mbalax, they are asserting identities that cross several layers, including ethnic, national, religious, traditional, and modern (John Collins 1989, 2000a, 2000b, 2000c, Kwasi Ampene 2004 for Ghanaian genres; Sarah Truher 1997, Fiona McLaughlin 1997, James McNair 2004, Lucy Duran 1989 for Senegalese genres).

With all their fundamental differences, Ghanaians and Senegalese immigrants also have much in common and they share certain practices and experiences as they settle in Los Angeles. The majority of Ghanaian and Senegalese immigrants send regular remittances to their families back home. The majority perform some aspects of family rituals and celebrations in Southern California. Many families also record their ceremonies in pictures and videotape and circulate these images back home to their families, which helps boost the status of the extended family on both continents. And, many also receive videos of family ceremonies that were produced in their home countries, which they share with their communities in L.A. An underlying question in this research, then, is how do Ghanaian and Senegalese immigrants, having different religious and cultural histories, compare in their performance of music and dance during family ceremonies and national and ethnic cultural events? How do their performance practices of music and dance shape their experiences and reconfigure their identities transnationally? And finally, in the context of family rituals, what role do money and audio-visual media play in the construction of transnational communities in the New African Diaspora?

Current Theories of Globalization and Transmigration

In this section, I will reflect on current theories of globalization and transmigration and suggest how an ethnographic study such as this is critical towards our understanding of transnational communities. The literature on transmigration describes the current phase of emigration from Third World to First World countries as being fundamentally different from previous phases of immigration. What marks the current phase of emigration as distinct? What are the social and cultural factors for the differences and how are these differences theorized?

Three anthropologists, Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch and Cristian Szanton-Blanc, whose own research on Vincentian, Grenadian, Haitian and Filipino groups in New York signaled a shift in immigrant consciousness and practice, coined the term "transnationalism" to describe the new networking strategies by immigrant groups.

> A new kind of migrating population is emerging, composed of those whose networks, activities and patterns of life encompass both their host and home societies. Their lives cut across national boundaries and bring two societies into a single social field … a new conceptualisation is needed in order to come to terms with the experience and consciousness of this new migrant population. We call this new conceptualisation "transnationalism," and describe the new type of migrants as transmigrants (1992b:1).

Some have argued that the concept of transnationalism could easily have been applied to certain earlier studies of migration had the term been in vogue at the time (Gledhill 1998, Grillo 1998). This is particularly true of the research on migrants who were involved in rural to urban labor migration along the Rhodesian copper belt in South-Central Africa, in studies

undertaken by scholars of the Manchester School during the 1950s and 1960s (Gluckman 1960, Epstein 1958, Mitchell 1956, Hart 1971). The Manchester School of British social anthropology, led by Max Gluckman, was pioneering in its approach to urban phenomena of identity construction and negotiation (in terms of "tribalism") especially with regard to migrant groups in motion (Werbner 1990, Erickson 1992, Lentz 1995). According to Eriksen, "These studies of urbanisation and interethnic encounters rarely deal explicitly with confrontations between symbolic systems or cultural syncretism, but rather focus on aspects of instrumental action, and situational selection of statuses, taking place between agents of diverse cultural origins, who were thrown together in a shared industrial workplace (Wilson, 1942; Mitchell, 1956; Epstein, 1958; cf. also Gluckman, 1961)" (Eriksen 1992). Additionally, Mitchell's and Epstein's focus on family and friendship networks among migrants in urban areas (Mitchell 1956, 1969, Epstein 1956) is still relevant to current studies of transnationalism, as my research would suggest.

In contrast to the literature on migrant communities during the 1970s and 1980s, which chronicled the struggles of minority immigrant groups in Britain and America, the current phase of transmigration requires a different approach. Many of these earlier studies depicted marginalized groups in the host country as being caught "between two cultures" (Watson ed. 1977 qtd. in Grillo, et al. 1999). Rather, the activities of transmigration in the current mode of increased globalization are best regarded as balancing acts by immigrants between the sending and receiving societies. Immigrants in the transnational field position themselves "here" and "there" and "in-between." Analyses should include the globalizing forces that both hinder and help immigrants' adaptation to the host society and their

connections with their families and communities back home. It should include the fluid movement of people and ideas, the flows of money, media, cultural items, materials, and cultural expression.

Secondly, many contemporary scholars question the validity of a bipolar framework for situating black African immigrants in diasporic situations. As Patricia Pessar (2003) points out, a bipolar framework limits the analysis to an either/or result, which assumes that immigrants are physically and emotionally committed to being either "here" or "home," choosing either settlement or return (Pessar 2003: 21-22). Alternatively, scholars have recently concluded that black immigrants from Africa and the Caribbean construct transnational circuits rather than settlement-or-return mentalities. The current scholarship on transnationalism of black immigrants owes much to a collection of essays called *Caribbean Circuits: New Directions in the Study of Caribbean Migration* edited by Pessar (1997). Pessar notes that "most of the contributors to the volume initially set out to assess the impact of return migration on the region's economic development" (2003:22), casting settlement and return as discreet and opposing actions. However, many of the contributors, including Luis Guarnizo (1997), discovered in the process of fieldwork that "there were very few cases of definitive return and many of transnational mobility and transnational relations (14)" (ibid.).

Third, the current phase of transmigration requires a shift from previous theoretical constructions by postmodern anthropologists which placed the emphasis of identity construction in the age of global connectivity squarely on the imagination and consciousness (Appadurai 1996, Hall 1990, Gilroy 1993, Clifford 1997, Jameson 1991). Appadurai's assertion that "The imagination is now central to all forms of agency, is itself a social fact,

and is the key component of the new global order," (1996:31) is indicative of the postmodernist imaginings of multiply placed subjects in diaspora. However, in the words of Italian scholars Grillo, Riccio, and Salih, the intellectually stimulating conceptualizations by these scholars "do not provide much empirical and analytical material to sustain their evocative explorations" (1999:7). A more effective approach involves locating identity formation in the actions and practices by social actors, through which social relations are made and identities are multiply configured and negotiated (ibid.).

Although Gilroy's conceptualization of the "black Atlantic world" (1993:3) has been a primary source for understanding black diasporic cultural production in recent years, it may not suffice in conveying the identity politics of African immigrants in the current transnational mode. Gilroy's aim is clearly focused on black British citizens and their syncretic histories with the Caribbean, the United States, and Africa in an attempt to rise up out of nationalist and ethnocentric discourses and assert identities that celebrate blackness. It is important to acknowledge how the black Atlantic has been relevant to political and social projects related to black consciousness, but it is also prudent to recognize how it fails to represent the actual identity references for most contemporary African immigrants. In reality, African immigrants from the continent do not regard themselves as directly involved in a black diasporic configuration, but more often, more deeply, and more performatively configure their diasporas around ethnic, national, and religious identification.

Fourth, the increasing globalizing forces have led some scholars to anticipate the existence of a post-national age, characterized by the increasing dissolution of national boundaries and social consciousness (Soysal 1994, Kearney 1996). However, since the terror

attacks in New York City and the Pentagon in 2001, followed by the reactionary strikes by the Bush administration against Afghanistan and Iraq, the world's peoples have been involved in a stunningly swift process of nationalization. Also, the empirical evidence presented in a number of transnational migration studies counters the concept of a post-national age by demonstrating the ongoing constraints by America and Europe and the struggles by immigrants to gain access into the national sphere (Grillo, et al. 1999). My ethnographic results show that, on one hand, African immigrants actively pursue projects of social development and nation-building in their home countries, while at the same time, American policies continue to limit immigration and citizenship among foreigners, in an attempt to tighten its own borders. As Grillo, et al. assert, "Transnationalism is more likely to stimulate a transformation of the nation-state as we know it rather than precipitate the disappearance of its function and existence" (1999:19).

Identity, Ethnicity, and Kinship

The current phase of transmigration calls for a rethinking of certain terminology, particularly the terms, diaspora and ethnicity. Historically, the term "African Diaspora" has been used to describe a conceptual field of people who trace their ancestry wholly or partly to Africa. The dispersion of peoples from Africa has its nexus in the forced migration of enslaved peoples during the trans-Atlantic slave trade. The descendants of forced migrants, spread across the Americas and the rest of the world, potentially relate to one another through a common homeland, Africa, and a common racial identity. The increasing emigration of African-born people during the latter half of the twentieth century and the early twenty-first

century has problematized this rendering of the African Diaspora. Some scholars interpret the new voluntary emigration of Africans as a new chronological phase of African Diaspora (Emmanuel Akyeampong 2000, John Arthur 2000, Margaret Peil 1995, Patricia Pessar 2003, Leigh Swigart 2001), and have circulated the term "*New* African Diaspora" to describe the phenomenon. Since then, the term has yet to find universal acceptance among scholars. Meanwhile, the term "African Diaspora" is often used interchangeably to describe the dispersal of African descendants as well as the more recent movement of African immigrants from the continent. This is problematic, because the term is expected to simultaneously signify very different experiences, identities, and social histories. Some scholars fine tune their analyses to signify a group in question, for example, a national group such as the Ghanaian Diaspora or an ethnic group such as the Yoruba Diaspora (see Falola and Childs 2005). In lieu of more adequate terminology, I have employed the terms with care and hope that their usage does not further muddy the waters. In general, I use the term "African Diaspora" to denote people in a multi-national space who trace their ancestry wholly or partly to Africa. I use the terms "Diaspora," "New African Diaspora" and "African immigrant Diaspora" to describe the network of African immigrants abroad and their families at home in Africa.

Next, I wish to consider whether the term, ethnicity, is a useful category for discussing Africans and African-born immigrants. A critique of ethnicity in Africanist scholarship is grounded in the ambiguity of the term itself, the lack of a consistent definition and application, and the limitations of the term for describing the multi-dimensional processes and politics of identity construction and negotiation among Africans (Lentz 1995).

Ethnicity, like identity in general, should be seen as dynamic, fluid, situational, and a matter of agency. Currently, social psychologists are revisiting the concept of ethnic identity in their research in order to better serve diverse groups. The psychologist Jean Phinney (1990) has defined ethnic identity as "a dynamic, multidimensional construct that refers to one's identity, or sense of self as a member of an ethnic group" (2003:63 qtd. in Trimble and Dickson 2004 in press). She adds that, "Ethnic identity is not a fixed categorization, but rather is a fluid and dynamic understanding of self and ethnic background. Ethnic identity is constructed and modified as individuals become aware of their ethnicity, within the large (sociocultural) setting" (ibid.). However, while I agree that identity, and particularly ethnicity, is dynamic and multi-dimensional (ibid.), identity should not be considered as entirely fluid and changeable. For one, identities are situational to the extent that they are influenced by cultural, social, and historical constraints (Grillo, et. al. 1999). And two, identities have some referential grounding which allows people to maintain a consistency of self throughout their lives, which is then open to situational adjustments through social interactions and relations of power. Identity, therefore, should be seen as neither fixed or overdetermined, as Marx and Adorno and Horkheimer previously advanced, nor in a constant state of flux, as Stuart Hall and others in cultural studies have suggested (ibid.).

My research on African immigrants suggests that family, or lineage, has a significant influence on identity construction and is in fact, a main source from which Africans choose to associate their ethnic identity. As Thomas Hylland Eriksen has noted regarding ethnic identification among African groups, "Although criteria for ethnic differentiation are not consistent with each other, there is always a close link between ethnic identity and kinship.

Politics, jobs, and marriage are often, but far from always, regulated through an ethnic idiom" (Eriksen 1999:51-52). In his research on families in Mauritius, he concludes that, "Much of what passes for ethnic organisation in Mauritius is simply kinship organisation, and a strong commitment to the family and kin group is found, both in ideology and in practice, in all ethnic groups in the island" (ibid.). This is not to suggest a socio-biological conception of ethnicity as evolving from a common ancestry (Van den Bergh 1981 in Lentz 1995), but to locate the discursive fields of productions and negotiations of identity among sub-Saharan Africans.

The agentive process of ethnic affiliation and its connection to lineage and kinship is more clearly pronounced with persons of mixed heritage. Among Africans of mixed heritage, their choice of ethnic identity does not always match the expected lineal structure (matrilineal, patrilineal, or double descent). For example, an individual with an Asante father and Ga mother, each of which are matrilineal groups, may choose to identify him or herself as Asante rather than Ga, even though normatively, the person "should" identify with the matrilineage. Although I am not aware of any empirical data regarding this phenomena, I have encountered many such cases in one-on-one contacts with Africans and African immigrants. A recent study by a clinical psychologist on ethnic identity construction among multi-ethnic persons (Root 1994) posits that people of mixed heritage generally choose their ethnic group affiliation depending on a variety of factors. After interviewing numerous persons of mixed heritage, Root concluded that:

> 1) One enhances their sense of security by understanding a distinct part of their ethnic heritage; 2) Parental influences stimulated by the encouragement of grandparents promote identity, thereby granting permission to the offspring to make a choice; 3) Racism and prejudice associated with certain groups lead to sharing experiences with family, thereby assisting the individual to develop psychological skills and defenses to protect oneself…; and 4) Gender alignment between parents and children may exert influence on ethnic and racial socialization particularly when they have good relationships and are mutually held in esteem (Root 1994:15 qtd. in Trimble and Dickson 2004 in press).

During my fieldwork research, I inquired about people's identity through interviews and questionnaires, by using language and region as stepping off points. I asked people to identify their first language, the language spoken by their mother and their father, their place of birth, and how they identify themselves, with a list of major ethnic groups, along with "other" as choices. Through the interviews, questionnaires, personal contact, and participant-observation during the fieldwork, I found that Ghanaians, on the whole, readily identified themselves by their ethnic identification such as Asante, Ga, Ewe, etc., while Senegalese avoided ethnic characterizations of themselves or others, and preferred to identify themselves according to nationality or religious affiliation. This coincides with identity formation and negotiation in Senegal and the Gambia in recent years. As a result of an expansive Wolofization process, many people, regardless of their ethnic group, identify as Wolof and speak Wolof as their primary language.

Like ethnicity, the concept of "family" is an extremely elastic category and is diverse in theory and practice. The notion of family among West Africans on the continent and

abroad differs widely from the construct of the American nuclear family, which, in theory, consists of a married couple and their children living in one household. Of course, this concept of the nuclear family has also been challenged recently in American society. The point is, when I refer to African families, I am not signifying the typical American construct of the nuclear family, nor am I referring to a static configuration of a group of people that happen to be connected to one another by blood relation. Rather, the African family is a dynamic construct that includes certain rights, privileges, obligations, and hierarchical relationships in a complex field of interactions.

Different ethnic groups in Ghana and Senegal have different concepts and expectations for producing and reproducing kinship relationships. For example, the Akan (of Ghana), in the traditional cosmological conception of the self, map the place of an individual in a physical and spiritual extended family. On the mother's side, an individual is born into an *abusua*, a matrilineal corporate descent group. The members of an abusua belong to the lineage through birth on the mother's side and not by marriage. From the mother's side, one inherits *mogya*, or "blood," which is linked to ancestors of the matrilineage (*nananom nsamanfoø*). When Akan people speak of "family" they are usually referring to the abusua, whereas the term for household, which may have a fluid and variable number and type of relations, is *fifo* (Bartle 1982). From the father's side in Akan cosmology, one belongs to an *ntorø*, a patrilineal line that is linked to the lesser deities (*obosum*). From the ntoro, one inherits a *sunsum*, a spiritual element which influences the personality of a person and is subject to pollution and sickness. Akans believe that one receives the soul (*økra*) and with it, one's destiny (*nkrabea*) directly from God (*Ønyame*). Traditionally, husbands and wives do

not reside in the same residence, but occupy their respective abusua houses. This pattern has changed with increasing urbanization and increasing Christian and western ideology, as more people in urban centers have taken to residing in nuclear family households. However, when people travel home to villages to attend family ceremonies such as funerals, husbands and wives tend to stay duolocally at their abusua houses.

By contrast, the Wolof (of Senegal) traditional conception of the self is stratified on two levels, one by kinship, and one by social caste. The strata of social caste is organized by three major hierarchical groups: the upper or dominant level of *géer* (noble or free-born), the lower or artisan level of *nyeeño*, which is sub-divided by specialization, including *géwël* (musicians, praise singers, and oral historians), *tëgg* (blacksmiths), *wude* (leatherworkers), and *rább* (weavers), and the third and lowest level of *jaam*, or descendants of slaves. A Wolof kinship group is organized patrilineally in a single residential compound, or *ker* (known as *carre* in French), which may include the head of household's (*borom ker*) brothers and their families. There is also a matrilineal component, or *men*, although it does not include corporate descent or inheritance. Wolof are traditionally polygynous and Muslim law allows a man to take up to four wives. But, there is a general disdain for marrying outside of one's social caste. An ideal marriage among Wolof occurs between cross-cousins. The great majority of Wolof practice one of two brotherhoods (tariqas) of sufism, Mouridiyya or Tijaniyya. People are generally born into a religious faith, although more and more young males are converting to Mouridism, given its abundant economic and spiritual appeal. Also, women generally marry into a religious sect, thereby converting upon marriage.

Grounding Remittances in Social and Musical Practice

The practice of sending remittances constitutes a major theme for African immigrants and directly affects the lives of African families on both continental coasts.

From a global standpoint, the IMF structural readjustments have played a large role in Africans' dependence on remittances from transmigrant family members (Grillo, et al. 1999). On a local level, the act of sending remittances is steeped in family obligation and status, and allows immigrants to continue the reproduction of social relationships in the extended family both materially and symbolically. African immigrants measure their success in America as an investment in their families' future (Arthur 2000). To this end, Africans on the continent sponsor family members to immigrate to the U.S. and provide those family members with financial support for education costs, room, and board. Once an immigrant has established him or herself with education and employment, the cycle of reciprocal exchange is fulfilled through sending regular remittances to family members, especially in times of urgent need, such as the burial of a loved one. "The strong networks and kinship bonds that the Africans have brought with them to the United States ensure the vitality of the immigrant family. The African immigrant family is more than a social unit. It is also a unit of production, harnessing the contributions of its members to help raise their standard of living" (Arthur 2000:96). A Ghanaian immigrant explained the fundamental reasons that Africans in America send regular remittances back home.

> It traces to the family. When you get a chance to get ahead, you help everyone else in the family. In wealth and advancement, there's no place better than America. Even in bad times, they have means to bounce back. The extended family growing up,

> everyone helps each other. Also, the inheritance, matrilineal and patrilineal, somebody helped you, you got hosted, paid by an uncle, so coming here, you go to school so you can send money home. You're the ladder, the bridge to help others get ahead. It ties you to home, you're bound to help. A little here is a lot there. There is a saying, "If the antelope will not go to the durbar, his skin has to go," meaning, the antelope is a wild animal. He cannot go to the durbar, because he would attack and eat the people, so the skin will go and cover the drums. Figuratively, my skin has to go to Africa, my support. Money here and there (Vincent Akosah, 1 April 2003, personal communication).

Africans also collect money in groups to help develop the religious, social, or political infrastructure in their home societies. Organized groups such as voluntary and hometown associations and religious groups collect money from their membership to send home to fund hospitals, schools, churches, and mosques in particular communities or regions. Among the primary contributors are disciples of the Mouridiyya, most of whom make their living selling luxury goods such as watches, hats, scarves, sunglasses, and designer clothing in downtown Los Angeles. Every Wednesday, a representative for the local Mouride order visits all of the Mouride vendors in the fashion district and collects donations (*adya*) which are sent to the mosque in Touba, the Mouride holy city where their founder and saint, Cheikh Amadou Bamba is buried. The regular investments to Touba help strengthen Mouridism as a social and political force in Senegal (Buggenhagen 2003, Roberts and Roberts 2003, Babou 2001).

In the ethnography, I link the global issue of remittances with local practices of cultural expression by Ghanaian and Senegalese immigrants in Los Angeles to appreciate the

ongoing interrelationship between music, dance, and family ties. For example, the absence of young males in Senegal, coupled with the increase of remittances to Senegalese households, has caused a shift in the social relations and operations in the domestic sphere in Senegalese cities and rural villages. This process has weakened the autonomy and authority of elder men, put more control of household decisions including marriage and lifecycle ceremonies with older women (Buggenhagen 2003, Fall 2000). The process of shifting gender relations is reflected in the ways in which Senegalese immigrant women comport themselves in the dancing arena during family lifecycle ceremonies. In the ethnography, I look at Senegal women's dancing practices during diasporic weddings and baptisms in Los Angeles and compare them with earlier ethnographic findings from Senegal to suggest that Senegalese immigrant women are opening up discursive spaces for change and transformation through dance.

The absence of educated and skilled individuals in Ghana has created a brain drain, but has also led to more money being filtered into Ghana through regular remittances via Western Union. These monies are used not only for development projects towards nation-building, but towards funding family ceremonies, which are sites for identity production and status-building. In recent years, Ghanaians have developed the funeral ritual into the most lavish, elaborate, and expensive lifecycle ceremony in society, with the intention of raising their families' prestige and status (De Witte 2001, 2003). As a result, Ghanaian funerals have become increasingly dependent on the labor and remittances of immigrant family members in America and Europe (Mazzucato, et al 2004). Music, dance, and financial contributions are also enmeshed during Ghanaian funerals, in that people are expected to dance as a show of

respect for the family and to donate money as a reciprocal social responsibility. Ghanaian immigrant communities have devised ingenious ways of continuing these links and dependencies by performing symbolic wake keepings, burial services, and funerals for family members who have died and were buried in Ghana. At these absentee funerals, families entertain their guests with music, dance, drinks, food and often a screening of a videotape of the actual funeral, in exchange for monetary donations by the guests.

Viewing Media as a Transnational Tool

The circulation of videotapes of family ceremonies figures prominently in my ethnographic descriptions and analyses. Home videos of diasporic family ceremonies are one of the creative means by which Ghanaian and Senegalese transmigrants stake their claims in both the local society and the home society, and thus actively assert their place and influence in both locales. The increasing transnational character of African family ceremonies due to migration has influenced and is influenced by the development of a semi-professional industry of specialists who photograph and videotape family rituals and celebrations. For example, the explosion of funerals as the most lavish and expensive lifecycle ceremony in contemporary Ghanaian society has spawned a professional funeral industry, which includes photographers and videographers who are hired to record all the ritual and celebratory aspects of funerary events (De Witte 2003).

My analysis shows that African immigrants use videos of family ceremonies for two main projects. One project involves raising the status of families by circulating videotapes of ceremonies performed in Los Angeles, which are felt to signify high status and success of the

immigrants. The second project is the use of videos of rituals that were performed in either Africa or the U.S. as a stand-in for the experience of "being there" at family ceremonies. Both projects link families across the transnational space.

The saturation of media in the world has attracted an emerging interest by anthropologists in western and non-western forms and functions of electronic media, including photography, videography, film, new music media, and the internet. Two recent edited collections represent the range of approaches and areas of interest in this burgeoning sub-field of anthropology, *The Anthropology of Media* (Askew and Wilk 2002) and *Media Worlds* (Faye Ginsburg, Lila Abu-Lughold, and Brian Larkin 2002). Kelly Askew aptly sums up the ideology of this developing concern by suggesting that, "Media technologies do not mediate between themselves and people. Rather, they mediate between people and this is what defines them as a distinct variety of technology" (Askew 2002:2).

Many of the articles in the collections relate media to processes of identity construction and community formation and transformation within processes of globalization. A brief review of two such articles from *The Anthropology of Media* will help frame my approach to Senegalese and Ghanaian immigrants' use of videography. The two articles I found useful and comparable to my research interests are Stephen Sprague's interpretation of Yoruba portrait photography (Sprague 2002) and Faye Ginsburg's analysis of film and televisual media in the hands of Australian Aborigines (Ginsburg 2002).

Stephen Sprague presents an ethnographic study of Yoruba portrait photography to show how Yoruba people have incorporated the medium to suit their own cultural uses. Sprague's chief concern is interpreting the content of the photographs, including how Yoruba

photographers frame the subject, pose the subject, and arrange items of importance in the photo. He determines that the portraits are "coded in Yoruba" and reveal information "about how the Yoruba see themselves; about their cultural values and their view of the world" (Sprague 2002:184). Sprague also deduces that, for most members of the culture, portrait photographs serve as visual records and memory aids of an event or time in one's life. His reading of the photographic content as being reflective of cultural values is clearly on the forefront of a new critical engagement with media, as he suggests that, "A coherent methodology for interpreting the photographic heritage of a non-Western society has never been attempted as far as I am aware" (ibid.).

In an article on the film and televisual media produced by Australian Aborigines, Faye Ginsburg crafts a critical perspective of indigenous media. She suggests that indigenous media are inextricably situated within two dominant tropes, the "Faustian contract" advanced by Frankfurt School and the "global village" conceived by Marshall McLuhan. She critiques the Frankfurt School paradigm for positioning "traditional cultures" as pure and "authentic," and as potentially "irreversibly polluted by contact with the high technology and media produced by mass culture" (Ginsburg 2002:212). The paradigm imagined by these processes pits a dominating hegemony against "overdetermined" social actors (ibid.). On the other hand, she suggests that the global village schema of McLuhan foresees people actively creating a global community by engaging with the accelerating technological advances. "However, the important, specific ways in which cultures differ and people experience political and economic inequality are erased in a modernist and ethnocentric utopian vision of an electronic democracy" (Ginsburg 2002:213). She proposes a middle ground for analyzing

media by referencing models from cultural studies which favor the theoretical category of "hybridity" in contemporary identity processes, such as Stuart Hall's conception of identity as "always in process" and "always constituted within, not outside, representation" (Stuart Hall 1992:285 qtd. in Ginsburg 2002:213).

Ginsburg's analytical approach towards indigenous media is less concerned with "video as text" and more with "the cultural *mediations* that occur through film and video works" (Ginsburg 2002: 212, emphasis in original). By examining visual media that are intended for broadcast, she interprets the aims of the indigenous producers as an attempt to recuperate and inform as they cross cultural boundaries. Film and television media, in the context of her study, "can be used effectively to mediate historically produced social ruptures that link past and present" (2002:213) and are thus instrumental in processes of identity construction.

In short, Sprague is concerned with interpreting the *content* of Yoruba portrait photography to determine what the content reveals about cultural identity and values, which he suggests are encoded in the self-representations. Ginsburg, on the other hand, is more focused on the *mediation* process in indigenous media. She sees media technologies in the hands of Aborigines as an alternative political and social tool, which allows the disenfranchised to mediate across cultural boundaries and recuperate certain losses or disjunctures.

Rather than privileging one approach over the other, I have found that both of these issues – content and mediation – are relevant towards understanding the style and functions of videography of African immigrant family ceremonies. In terms of content, I am interested

in the technical choices that Senegalese and Ghanaian videographers make in self-representation of family ceremonies, including framing the subject, editing, and music accompaniment, and what the content can tell us about cultural identity, values, and worldview of the video producers and subjects. Without going into great analytical detail about the video content (which is beyond the scope of this ethnography), I will include descriptions of the video content and posit the producers' strategies for self-representation as I describe the events of the rituals and celebrations which were videotaped.

For example, in the Senegalese videos of Mouride baptisms and weddings, the opening credits are accompanied by recordings of Qu'ranic verse or *qasa'id*, which are songs of the oral poetry of Cheikh Amadou Bamba. During the lifecycle celebrations, the camera is trained on women dancing in circles for long periods of time. Equal time is given to various participants in the celebration, rather than focusing mostly on the main subjects of the rite. Carefully edited montages depict close-ups of women's faces, their gold jewelry, dresses, shoes, and handbags. The value reflected in these montages relates to the Senegalese women's *sanse*, or sense of style, which reflects feminine grace, an important characteristic for garnering *baraka* (blessing) and for reflecting well on the status of families.

With the fairly new enterprise of videotaping diasporic ceremonies, there are certain questions to consider. How might videotaping the ceremonies influence or change the way people perform music and dance and other traditional rites at their ceremonies? To what extent are people performing for the camera? To what extent are the videos reflective or influenced by popular music videos in their respective cultures? Do videos of ceremonies in

the Diaspora influence changes in the way rituals and celebrations are performed in the home countries, and vice versa? What transformations in performance are taking place?

The second issue concerns the work, or mediation, that the audio-visual media accomplish. In my opinion, videos of Ghanaian and Senegalese family ceremonies go beyond acting as *souvenirs* (memories), or recorded documents that facilitate remembering an event, as they do in western and many non-western cultures. I argue that an African family video of a baptism, wedding, or funeral also serves as a stand-in for experience and an invitation to participate in the rituals and celebrations, therefore, allowing viewers to join the circle.

Currently, certain aspects of rituals are performed translocally, sometimes in the absence of key players, and often using stand-ins to represent absent family members. How do the video sounds and images bring families together across the globe? How do Africans use videotape as a transnational tool? In the case of Ghanaian immigrant funerals which are performed in the absence of the deceased, the surviving family members show the video of the actual funeral that took place in Ghana – including the ritual performances featuring music, dancing, prayers, and processions during the wake keeping, church services, burial, and final funeral rites. The screening of the video in the context of a funeral reception allows friends and community members to feel as though they had attended the funeral and also gives the hosts a chance to collect donations towards the funeral expenses. Attending funerals is at the heart of Ghanaian social relationships and reciprocal social responsibilities, and the videotapes accomplish the continual formation of identities within this cultural system, even as members of the society are scattered across the globe.

In the other direction, videos of rituals and celebrations performed in the Diaspora are circulated, not always in direct paths, back to people's countries of origin. The fact that baptisms, wedding receptions, and funeral receptions[3] performed in diasporic cities such as Los Angeles or New York are often considered status events, the videos of these ceremonies are sources of cultural capital for family members back at home. A videotape of a ceremony performed in Los Angeles can certainly increase a family's prestige and status position in the community. Therefore, the videos of rituals and celebrations not only work towards linking families across the Diaspora, but they do real cultural work in negotiating social relationships between family members and between families by boosting a family's prestige and honor within society.

Methodology and Fieldwork

This dissertation is the result of two years of fieldwork and one year of follow-up research and writing in Los Angeles. My research in Los Angeles was prefaced by a summer of preliminary research in the summer of 2001. Before heading to Los Angeles, I had only one contact, Nnamdi Moweta, whom I was referred to by my friend and colleague David Lynch (the writer, not the director) after they had met at the Fez Festival in Morocco. Nnamdi is a central figure in the African immigrant community and a dynamo in the African music industry. Nnamdi Moweta is the DJ of the African music program, Afrodicia (Saturdays on KPFK 90.7 FM), a contributor to Voice of America radio series, producer of the African Village Concert series which has hosted artists such as Bembeya Jazz, Soukous

[3] Videos of funerals are common among Ghanaians, but not Senegalese.

Stars, Kanda Bongo Man, and Papa Wemba, and manager of the Nigerian highlife star Chief Stephen Osita Osadebe. Nnamdi was instrumental in getting me set up that first summer. He referred me to a drum teacher, Baba Kwashi Amevuvor, who referred me to a Twi tutor, Nana Osei-Tutu, who happened to be the president of the Ghana Association of Southern California. These initial introductions led to more and more introductions of musicians and leaders in the Ghanaian and Senegalese immigrant communities.

During that summer, I sublet an apartment in a fourplex in the Silver Lake neighborhood.[4] The pace of my research that summer was rigorous. I took Twi classes three nights a week at Nana's house and did my Twi homework during the rest of the week. I took drum lessons from Kwashi two days a week and practiced on the other days. I made it a goal to learn my way around the city by studying maps, quizzing myself on the complex system of highway names and numbers, and doing a lot of driving. Driving back and forth around Los Angeles to my appointments, from a predominately white and Hispanic area of town (Silver Lake) to predominately black areas of town (South Central Los Angeles, West Los Angeles, Inglewood) with numerous ethnic enclaves in between, I was afforded a remarkable view of the city that most tourists never get, and I got the impression of a very diverse and historically rich city.

My decision to compare Ghanaian and Senegalese performance practices is based on two different experiences. Ghana was an obvious choice. I had studied at the University of Ghana, Legon for one year during my undergraduate music degree, and performed and taught

[4] I want to thank Mady Schutzman, professor at California Institute of the Arts, for letting me stay at her apartment in Silver Lake in the summer of 2001 and at her newly bought house in Highland Park in June of 2002.

Ghanaian drumming for several years in Austin, Texas. And, I was ready to put my Twi to use. As for Senegal, the choice was serendipitous. My first week in Los Angeles, Nnamdi put me on the guest list for a Senegal Association party, which took place at a nightclub in Hollywood. That party was a real eye-opener and an introduction to the small, but vital Senegalese immigrant community. The DJ started the evening by playing an international mix of African popular music, including soukous, rhumba, highlife, and makossa to please the fairly diverse crowd. Then, when a large group of Senegalese men and women streamed into the club around midnight, the DJ shifted the music to mbalax and kept it there for the rest of the evening. As loud mbalax music filled the space, the Senegalese quickly moved themselves into a large circle, swaying, clapping, smiling and whooping. One at a time, they would leap into the center of the circle and dance an impressively acrobatic solo and quickly retreat to the outer circle. Their enthusiasm and joy were electrifying. A tall Senegalese man was videotaping the entire dancing scene, closely following the moves of each solo dancer with a hand-held video camera and bright spotlight. After a long period of dancing, a traditional sabar drum and dance troupe called Xhaley Ngewel performed. I discovered that the troupe resides in Los Angeles and performs regularly for Senegalese national events and family ceremonies, as well as public events, concerts, and workshops. Unfortunately, the pictures I took of the evening did not come out, because in my excitement, I had mis-loaded my old 35 mm camera. But I determined that the Senegalese community would figure into my research. Nearly a year into my fieldwork, after pounding the pavement to meet Senegalese music practitioners and people hosting family events, I met the man who videotaped this party and got a copy of the tape for myself.

The summer of 2002, I moved to an apartment in Hollywood with my boyfriend, Ben Davis. My first project was to compile a directory of African businesses and services including restaurants, grocery stores, churches, mosques, clothing and fabric stores, record and video stores, nightclubs, and concert venues. I patronized various African businesses and visited churches and mosques. Next, I compiled a list of African ethnic and national associations and their officers and a list of musicians, dancers, and DJs. This project was ongoing and allowed me to get a layout of the immigrant residential and business areas. It also provided a resource for collecting flyers that promoted African immigrant ethnic, national, and family events. I had learned during my Masters fieldwork among African immigrants in Houston that flyers are the primary method, along with word of mouth, for advertising African events. Patronizing businesses also gave me the opportunity to meet more people and make them aware of my fieldwork. Overall, people were extremely generous, cooperative, and anxious to read the results of my research.

I embarked on an intensive year of participant-observation research, which included performing and studying with African immigrant musicians. I continued taking drum lessons from Kwashi Amevuvor and performed with him on several occasions, including the African Marketplace and Cultural Faire. After performing a set of Ewe religious songs with Kwashi at the Ghana Independence Day celebration at an African immigrant Pentecostal church, the pastor invited me to join their gospel group, or "praise team." I performed with them every Sunday for seven months. I taught a Ghanaian hand drumming class at Motherland Music for several months, but failed to attract a steady following of students like I had had in Austin. But, several African drum teachers expressed having the same problem because of the long

distances between neighborhoods in Los Angeles. I also attended other events such as town hall meetings, visits by dignitaries, Independence Day celebrations of Senegal and Ghana, association-sponsored family picnics, association parties, holiday parties, and concerts. I was also fortunate to have been invited to a number of family ceremonies including baptisms, a traditional wedding and wedding reception, wake keepings, and funeral receptions.

I interviewed many musicians, DJs, religious leaders, association presidents, students, and other members of the Ghanaian and Senegalese communities. In order to formulate and narrow my thesis, I wrote a questionnaire, one targeted to each country, largely based on a questionnaire administered by John Arthur (2000) in his study of the African immigrant Diaspora. The responses by people on the questionnaires helped me realize the deep importance of family ties to the immigrants' ritual performance practices and their daily identity negotiations. Thus, I narrowed my thesis to the realm of family and kinship. At one point in my research, when I met Ismaila Baby, the videographer of the Senegal Association party (above), he shared several videotapes that he had recorded of Senegalese family ceremonies to use for my research. He was extremely helpful in interpreting the meanings of the songs and other cultural activities during the ceremonies. The videos of the rituals, along with his interpretations, became valuable for writing about events that I had not attended. Eventually, during the write-up phase, I recognized the real and dynamic value of videotapes for connecting families transnationally, and I incorporated the phenomenon into my thesis.

The main limitation I encountered in the comparative ethnographic approach was the sheer load of information necessary to gather and analyze, as I was essentially doing two ethnographies. Often, different events in the immigrant communities would compete for my

time and attention. And, since I was fairly new to Senegalese music-cultures, it required a lot of background research as well. At several points during the research, I considered dropping the comparative aspect and focusing on only one immigrant group. But, I was convinced that the comparative aspect would lead to a more thorough understanding of the intricate and complex identity politics in process among different African immigrant groups.

Overview of Chapters

In the introductory chapter, I have advanced the idea that a new phase of African immigration is underway, characterized by people dynamically engaging in transnational strategies which link themselves with members of their home families and societies. Immigrants' identity politics within this configuration rely on the creation and maintenance of networks of association and like-identification. My ethnography will add to this new discursive terrain by showing the importance of cultural expressions such as music and dance during kinship-centered events for maintaining these links. People's cultural expressions of music and dancing are key channels for performing difference and for negotiating their kinship-based, religious, ethnic, and national identities. The links between the local and national societies are accomplished through the performance of lifecycle rituals in dual or multiple locations, the performance of music and dance which accentuate familial identity and build social relationships, the flow of money from immigrants to their families through regular remittances, and the circulation of audio-visual media of rituals and celebrations.

Chapter two, "Placing Ghanaian and Senegalese Immigrants in Los Angeles," recognizes that the ethnographic setting is a fundamental character in the ethnography. A

brief social history of Los Angeles and the surrounding areas shows that, through consistent waves of immigration, Los Angeles has developed into one of the most ethnically diverse cities in the world. The discussion narrows in on the background of Ghanaian and Senegalese migration to the area and to the United States in general during the last half century. I then provide an overview of the residential and business patterns of African immigrants in Southern California and compare these data with the analyses of urban cultural geographers. My findings suggest that Ghanaians and Senegalese immigrants resist assimilating to the dominant culture by creating insular communities, not always by proximity, but through cultural practices and membership in like-identified groups.

Chapter three, "African Associations: Channeling Ethnic and National Identity," introduces the voluntary associations in Southern California which serve as mutual aid organizations for Ghanaian and Senegalese immigrants. National and ethnic associations work to assist their membership financially by helping people adjust and survive in the host society. Associations play a key role in amassing the funds necessary to produce family ceremonies such as naming ceremonies, weddings, and especially funerals. Through their participation in ethnic and national associations, immigrants reproduce cultural institutions, replicate kinship-based structures, and form social, economic, and political bonds among like-identified people. The chapter presents a detailed ethnography of several cultural events in Southern California sponsored by the associations. Depending on the nature of these events, people promote and reproduce varying levels of national, ethnic, and religious identities through engaging in their own culture's music, dances, language, cuisine, and traditional styles of dress.

Chapter four, "Naming Ceremonies," examines the adaptive strategies by Senegalese and Ghanaian immigrants when replicating one of the primary African family ceremonies, the baby naming ceremony, in Los Angeles. The chapter begins by teasing out some of the psychological and social pressures that many parents express upon the birth of a child in the United States. African immigrants belong to social systems which uphold a host of traditional customary rites, religious rites, social and familial relationships, age group responsibilities, and performance practices. In diasporic naming ceremonies, immigrant parents inculcate the newest member of the family into the sphere of their cultural and religious values. They introduce the baby into a performance complex in which music and dance are key carriers of cultural identity. Naming ceremonies in the Diaspora are often considered status events, and the videotapes of the rites have emerged as a source of cultural capital for boosting the prestige and status of families across the Atlantic.

Chapter five, "Weddings," looks at the different identity politics of the music and dance performances (or the lack thereof) during three different Senegalese and Ghanaian wedding events in Los Angeles. Although weddings represent the union and extension of families, weddings in the Diaspora result in a fragmentation and disjuncture of families. But, weddings epitomize the transnational character of contemporary African immigrant rituals, as certain aspects of weddings are arranged and performed in multiple locations, in Africa and abroad. Often, rituals and celebrations are performed in the absence of key players or with stand-ins representing family members. The wedding events featured in the ethnography convey the ongoing identity negotiations between Senegalese and Ghanaian men and women through music and dance. Like naming ceremonies, diasporic weddings also produce a flow

of money (via bridewealth payments), commercial and cultural items (for the dowry), and images (via videotapes and photographs) which circulate around the Diaspora.

Chapter six, "Funerals," focuses on the transnational nature of funeral ceremonies among Ghanaian and Senegalese immigrants. Because Senegalese funerals are devoid of music and dance given the Muslim context, I focus on ethnographic descriptions of Ghanaian, and specifically Akan, immigrant funerals. Ghanaian immigrants have helped transform contemporary Ghanaian funerals into the most lavish, expensive, and expressive lifecycle events in the entire society, partly for their financial contributions and partly for their transnational performance events. As it becomes more fashionable to videotape lifecycle rituals, the images of these events circulate back and forth and add further prestige to an extended family. The ethnographic descriptions from Akan immigrant funeral ceremonies aims to integrate the issue of remittances with the circulation of videotaped images and at the same time recognize the cultural dynamics of musical performance in this transnational process. Chapter six also includes conclusions about lifecycle ceremonies, performance, and identity politics for Senegalese and Ghanaian immigrants in Southern California.

Conclusion

Kwashi Amevuvor returned to Ghana for the first time in twenty-five years of living in what he calls "the ghetto" in South Central Los Angeles. He went for a three week visit, to officially complete his masters degree at the University of Ghana, Legon and to be honored at the Hogbetsøtsø festival in the Volta Region. He also wanted to show his wife, Queen, his home. An elder master drummer, Kwashi tells me that he was treated like a king in Ghana. In

Keta, his home village, women in the family compound picked out the clothes he would wear every morning, cooked all his meals, and fetched him anything he needed. At the festival he was introduced with the customary formalities afforded a chief drummer. Kwashi's cousin describes the scene:

> Before he goes out to play, there is a cultural invocation in which the king of the Anlo traditional area [has] to invoke the spirits of the whole land and there is a ceremony [which has] to be performed on him with white powder. And while they are doing that, there is a set of drummers around and they are asking the gods of the land to bless him so he can perform to the satisfaction of the ancestors. So when he gets there, he will be introduced and he will be under a palanquin, and he will be escorted all the way down to the drum and they will hand him drumsticks. And before he plays the drums, there will be pouring of libations, which consists of water and white powder[5] mixed together and a bottle of Schnapps. Kwashi, the floor is now open and there are people who want to hear your music (personal communication).

When Kwashi came back to L.A., there was a visible and palpable change in him. He had a brightness in his eyes and a serenity in his spirit. He shrugged off things with a chuckle that would normally make him angry. Ghana renewed Kwashi. He quickly began making plans to take tourists to Ghana for the future Hogbetsøtø Festival, partly so that he could return home again.

Most Ghanaian and Senegalese immigrants are able to return home sooner than twenty-five years, and many go home regularly, every two to five years. But even if people

are unable to travel regularly, the members of these transnational communities stay connected with their families and their countries in agentive ways. They maintain their connections to home and family through performing music and dance during rituals and celebrations of the lifecycle. At the same time, under the constraints of the host society, people compromise, adapt, and transpose their performances which eventually leads to subtle or significant changes to the ceremonies. African immigrants help increase the status of their families by sending regular remittances to fund family ceremonies and other needs. They keep the cultural lines open through circulating pictures and videotapes of family ceremonies, which are performed in multiple locations at home in Africa and in the Diaspora. The following chapters will look more closely at these cycles of creativity and ingenuity through an ethnography of Ghanaian and Senegalese immigrant performance.

[5] Cornmeal.

Chapter Two

Placing Ghanaian and Senegalese Immigrants in Los Angeles

"We are like the birds who think of home when flying high above the earth," Mouride saying.

City of Angels, State of Foreign-born

People from West Africa have made the journey to Southern California for the same reasons as hundreds of thousands of people from around the world – for the climate and the possibility of economic advancement. Since the Gold Rush of 1848, California has emitted an aura of economic promise to outsiders. Los Angeles epitomizes this allure, especially through the risk-taking endeavors of the film and television industries, the music industry, and the advertising industry. These multi-million dollar industries have created and projected an image of Los Angeles as a land of wealth, success, fame, and leisure. The area tends to live up to the paradisiacal image by providing outstanding weather, accessible beaches, and beautifully landscaped houses and apartments. At the same time, Los Angeles has had its share of negative characterizations during the past few decades, including gang violence, police brutality, earthquakes, wildfires, mudslides, traffic, and "plastic" people. Granted, these characterizations have merit, and they do prevent many people from moving to the area. Yet, Los Angeles is the fastest growing city in the United States and one of the most

ethnically diverse and self-segregated cities in the world. While the state of California currently consists of more than one-quarter foreign-born residents, Los Angeles County consists of 28 percent foreign-born residents among a total population of 9.7 million, and the City of Los Angeles has a 41 percent share of foreign-born residents among a population of 3.8 million (U.S. Census 2000). To put this in a national perspective, since 1965, more immigrants have come to Los Angeles than any other city in the United States.

The periodic influx of newcomers from across the globe has profoundly transformed the city's ethnic make-up and fueled debates over the impact of immigration on the region's economy (Waldinger and Bozorgmehr 1996; Allen and Turner 1997, 2002). The ethnic, racial, and cultural mosaic of Southern California is most often characterized by ethnic fragmentation and segregation into neighborhood enclaves. Driving through the various neighborhoods of Los Angeles, I witnessed this phenomenon in the signage which distinguishes the different enclaves, as well as the businesses which cater to the dominant ethnic group in neighborhoods such as Thai Town, Korea Town, Chinatown, Armenia Town, El Salvador Town, Little Ethiopia, Little Japan, and many others. I also witnessed obviously white dominated areas on the west side and north side of town, especially throughout the Hollywood Hills (an extension of the Santa Monica Mountains), and predominately black residential and economic areas on the south side, as well as saturated Latino neighborhoods on the east side of Los Angeles. However, according to urban ethnic geographers James P. Allen and Eugene Turner, the trends towards enclaves and suburban flight have taken a dramatic turn during the 1990s, which indicates that Angelenos are moving towards creating a more ethnically diverse society.

In order to place immigrants from Ghana and Senegal in the social landscape of Los Angeles, I will first introduce the ethnographic setting of Los Angeles through a brief geographic and social history of the area. Then, I will describe the residential and business patterns of Ghanaian and Senegalese immigrants in the City of Los Angeles and outlying suburbs. Finally, I will outline the recent history of West African immigration to the United States, paying particular attention to the social factors which influenced Ghanaians and Senegalese to migrate and the various immigration laws which either helped or hindered their admittance into the U.S. In this mapping of Ghanaian and Senegalese immigrants in Southern California, I am interested in the movement of both music practitioners as well as "real people," for whom music and dance are vital for negotiating identity and for celebrating lifecycle rituals which link their families in the U.S. to their families and communities at home in Africa. I look at the movement of musicians and dancers in terms of their reasons for moving, the social factors which influenced their decision to move, and their contribution to the music in the public sphere in Southern California and in private family rituals of African immigrants.

I seek to develop a social history of African migration which sees the family as a significant indicator of identity and mediator of cultural practice. This is a social history which recognizes that Africans' choices and agency in immigrating abroad are rooted in the ideals and aims of the extended family network, which work to increase a family's viability and opportunity in a global sphere. In an ethnomusicological sense, the music and dance at family ceremonies is often mediated by a familial politics of identity. The ethnographic examples in the following chapters will illuminate these social processes. But first, we will

take a bird's eye view of the City of Angels and determine how it became the vast, multi-ethnic metropolis that it is today.

A Geographic and Social History of Southern California

The sprawling urban area that is conceptualized as Los Angeles is more accurately understood as a conglomeration of many cities and suburbs within a five county area including the counties of Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Ventura, collectively regarded as the Los Angeles Metropolitan Area, or Southern California (Allen and Turner 2002). The main attraction of Los Angeles County is the City of Los Angeles, the second largest city in the United States, which itself engulfs numerous smaller areas and neighborhoods such as Hollywood, Silverlake, and Compton. It also surrounds or hovers near a number of smaller cities such as Beverly Hills, West Hollywood, Culver City, Inglewood, and Santa Monica, which have autonomous city status, but are still conceptualized as part of Los Angeles. A rough sketch of Los Angeles and adjacent cities includes, on the north side, Beverly Hills, West Hollywood, Hollywood, Los Feliz, Silverlake, and Echo Park; on the west side along the Pacific coast, Malibu, Topanga, Pacific Palisades, Santa Monica, and Venice; on the south side, Baldwin Hills, Crenshaw, Leimert Park, Inglewood, Hawthorne, Gardena, Watts, and Compton; and on the east side, Eagle Rock, Glendale, East Los Angeles, Boyle Heights, Highland Park, Mount Washington, South Pasadena, and Pasadena. Just over the Hollywood Hills lie several small towns which make up "the Valley" including Burbank, Studio City, North Hollywood, Van Nuys, Sherman Oaks, Encino, and Tarzana. There are also many outlying suburban cities in Los Angeles County and surrounding counties such as

Fontana, Covina, West Covina, Pomona, Ontario, Palmdale, Chino Hills, and Lawndale (see Figure 1. Map of Cities and Other Places in and around Los Angeles).

That Los Angeles is a city of immigrants and re-locators loosely held together through somewhat strained relations is not a new phenomenon, but a fact of life for the city since the first colonialists interrupted the lives of the native settlers. In the late eighteenth century, Spain was in the process of colonizing and Catholicizing California. The Spanish empire sent troops to accompany priests northward from Mexico to convert the Indian populations and collect them into missions, which they accomplished from the 1780s to the 1830s. Missions took the form of work camps with religious devotion. "For the aborigines, slavery in this world was a prerequisite for salvation in the next" (Fogelson 1967:5).

To defend the missions, Spain founded *presidios*, or garrisoned forts, along the Pacific coast and established *pueblos* (agricultural villages) to supply the soldiers at the presidios with foodstuffs, wine, livestock, and such. The imperial government recruited *pobladores* (colonists) from Mexico to develop the pueblos. Among them was a settlement which colonial governor Felipe de Neve dubbed *el pueblo de Nuestra Sênora la Reina de Los Angeles* (The Village of Our Lady the Queen of the Angels) in 1781. Its proximity to the Porciuncula River, along with the fertile land and hospitable climate proved hearty for development and made "Los Angeles" the highest ranked among California's settlements by the 1830s (Fogelson 1967:7).

In the 1830s, Mexico, newly independent from Spain, gained control over the missions and pueblos. The Mexican colonists expanded their estates into sprawling *ranchos*, which produced cattle and self-sufficient agriculture. To sustain the proper output, the

rancheros were dependent on Indian slave labor in farming, animal husbandry, and domestic work. But the relations between rancheros and Indians is characterized as being more friendly and sociable or at least more humane as those between southern United States plantation masters and black slaves (Fogelson 1967:9). Their yield in livestock was tremendous. With an overabundance of hides and tallows, the rancheros traded with British and American merchants.

The United States waged war with Mexico in 1846 and overtook the colonies of New Mexico and California. Subsequently, hordes of "Yankee emigrants" streamed into the lush, arid land to exploit the available resources (Fogelson 1967:10-12). The discovery of gold in northern California in 1848 transformed the state even further, as a massive migration of miners and land speculators rushed in. Chinese immigrants were the first to be imported as a labor force for mining and later, for the railways (Pearlstone 1990:72). Californian rancheros took advantage of the new demand for cattle with the increased population and got rich quickly. "Everybody in Los Angeles seemed rich," remarked one settler (Fogelson 1967:15). But, the quick and easy wealth soon spoiled the settlers. They overspent on extravagant clothing, jewelry, and saddles. They wasted money on gambling and neglected their businesses (ibid.). And, in an ironic foreshadowing of present day Los Angeles, settlers refused to walk anywhere, insisting on traveling even short distances by horse and buggy. Many paid the price when the gold rush ended and ranchos were scooped up by American ranchers and bankers.

In 1864, after a devastating flood and two years of drought, many ranchers suffered serious consequences and lost thousands of head of cattle. In an effort to keep up with the

competitive American market, the ranches were turned into agricultural enterprises, transforming the cattle ranges of southern California into a patchwork of farmland. This shift in economic focus once again attracted a wave of immigrants following the Civil War, around 1865, as the incoming were awed by the lush available acreage for farming. "The newcomers envisioned southern California as a region of unparalleled opportunity" (Fogelson 1967:19). With the new array of trades, crafts, and industrial professionals, which prompted a higher standard of living, Los Angeles was transformed into a bustling American town (Fogelson 1967:20).

During the 1870s and 1880s, a race was underway between San Diego and Los Angeles over which city would dominate the industrial market and emerge as the urban center of southern California. Los Angeles led a campaign to import immigrants to build up the metropolis. "If we take the right steps to induce [immigration], hither it will come," pronounced a writer from the Los Angeles *Express* (Fogelson 1967:63). The influx of new arrivals led to wild speculations of land, which ended in a bust in 1888. Again, from 1890 to 1920, the Chamber of Commerce promoted an idealized vision of Los Angeles as a land of plenty. The campaign coincided with a shifting social consciousness in the country, which favored personal fulfillment over material accumulation and economic advancement. People responded to the image of Los Angeles as a retreat from the harsh conditions in the remainder of the country and again, flocked to the area (Fogelson 1967:72). The Great Migration brought people from all over the country, among them, blacks from the southern and southwestern United States who secured jobs in railroad construction and domestic service, but resisted agricultural work (Dje Dje 1998:4).

In 1918, whites confined blacks to restricted residential areas, particularly in the neighborhoods surrounding the Central Avenue business district, a practice that led to severe ghettoization (Dje Dje 1998:4). Apparent discrimination such as refusal to serve blacks at restaurants and other businesses, coupled with an insurgent Ku Klux Klan movement, created a hostile environment for blacks in Los Angeles in the early twentieth century. Still, during the period of 1900 to 1929, known as the "Golden Era," blacks experienced a higher standard of living and many became homeowners (Dje Dje 1998:6). But ghettoization continued through the 1920s and 1930s as more and more blacks immigrated to the area and joined the restricted residential areas. The black population peaked in 1943 with an importation of railway workers from the South who sought wartime prosperity and social mobility (ibid.). The black presence continued to grow through the 1950s and 1960s until 1970, when Asian and Latino populations exploded and overshadowed the percentage of blacks (Dje Dje 1998:8).

In Los Angeles' Golden Era, specifically during the 1920s, the growing immigrant populations helped boost the economy amidst a growing real estate market and petroleum business. Also, the burgeoning motion picture industry, which was founded and developed by Jewish immigrants, projected Los Angeles as an almost surreal locale where regular folks become movie stars overnight. In many ways, the ideals and actions of entrepreneurs during this period created a template of Los Angeles that persists to this day and continues to attract waves of immigrants.

Placing African Immigrants in Los Angeles

During the latter half of the twentieth century, the rapid increase of immigrant populations has transformed Los Angeles into one of the most culturally diverse cities in the United States. In Los Angeles, the largest group of immigrants is Latin American by birth, mostly from Mexico and Central America. In fact, Los Angeles is home to the second largest population of Mexicans, next to Mexico City. The second largest immigrant group has come from Asia, specifically from China, the Philippines, Korea, Japan, Vietnam, and India in that order. The third largest group comprises the recent wave of arrivals from the Middle East, who are mostly skilled professionals or entrepreneurs. Additionally, Los Angeles is home to the second largest Jewish community in the United States, next to New York.

Urban ethnic geographers Allen and Turner present statistical evidence that illustrates the residential settlement of Southern Californians according to ethnicity, ancestry, place of birth, education, homeownership, and other parameters. Their evidence shows that the Los Angeles Metropolitan Area comprises a fragmented social milieu, in which residents, especially immigrants, self-segregate according to their ethnicity, class, and location. On the other hand, their results also indicate that diversity, or the absence of one dominant ethnic group in a residential area, has increased in outlying suburbs, while ethnic dominance is the highest at the economic extremes, both in the poorest areas, which are strongly Latino, and the most affluent and expensive, which are strongly white areas (Allen and Turner 2002:55). Within this extremely diverse multicultural social mix, West African immigrants rarely figure into the discourse about immigration, citizenship, or race relations, in contrast to the more apparent existence of Africans in the other major multi-ethnic city, New York. One reason is

that each national group from Africa, including those from Ghana and Senegal, represent fairly small immigrant communities in Los Angeles. Even so, Africans have been emigrating to Southern California in increasing numbers since the mid-1960s and have adapted their lifestyles and cultural processes in the midst of intensifying anti-immigrant and racial sentiments. As Ghanaian scholar John Arthur notes, African immigrants are "largely invisible and unknown to many Americans," but are nonetheless, "becoming some of the continent's most educated and dynamic people" (Arthur 2000:vii).

How, then, are African immigrants mapped in the cultural mosaic of Los Angeles? During my fieldwork, I discovered that many African immigrants settle in black residential areas, while many others live away from predominantly black areas in the outlying suburbs such as Fontana, Covina, West Covina, Pomona, Ontario, Palmdale, Chino Hills, and Lawndale. African immigrants are scattered about the five-county area, with a large number of pockets of concentration, rather than one main enclave, as is often the case in other cities with large African immigrant populations such as New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, and Houston. Allen and Turner's research corroborates this fact, although their findings do suggest that African immigrants are more likely to settle in the outlying suburbs. Their map of Foreign-born Black residences illustrates this pattern (see Figure 3).

Evidence of a large African immigrant population in black residential areas is apparent in the number of businesses owned and operated by West African immigrants that cater to an African immigrant clientele. Businesses such as African grocery stores, restaurants, night clubs, dress and tailor shops, music and video stores, hair salons, and immigrant churches dot the black residential and economic districts of West Los Angeles,

South Los Angeles, Inglewood, Crenshaw, Leimert Park, and Baldwin Hills. These businesses are owned mostly by Anglophone West Africans such as Ghanaians, Nigerians, and Cameroonians, along with some Francophone West Africans such as Senegalese, Togolese, and Ivorians. In addition to businesses which cater to the needs and desires of African immigrants, many Africans operate home businesses which provide services such as immigration services, catering, computer consulting, graphic design, errands, travel agency, home video services, import and export, and hair styling. At African-owned businesses, the insular nature of African immigrant communities is maintained through a closed-circuit of advertising via flyers, business cards, and word-of-mouth promotion of other African businesses, services, and cultural events. At any given African business such as a restaurant, music and video store, salon, or tailor, one can find small stacks of business cards and postcards advertising African businesses and services and flyers promoting upcoming events in the African community. These events include family ceremonies such as anniversaries, wedding receptions or funerals, ethnic events such as festivals or royal ceremonies, or national events such as national independence day celebrations or visitations by dignitaries.

Apart from owning a business or providing a service for fellow immigrants, most Ghanaians work in professional or managerial positions as doctors, nurses, lawyers, professors, teachers, real estate agents, insurance agents, engineers, or in other positions such as salespersons or clerks. Often, Ghanaians work menial jobs such as taxi driver, custodian, or fast food server while attending college, in the hopes of landing a lucrative job upon graduating. In contrast, the majority of Senegalese immigrants are disciples of Mouridism and are active in a global merchant network of Senegalese businessmen who sell luxury items

in the urban marketplace. Senegalese Mourides in Southern California work primarily in the fabric district in downtown Los Angeles selling their merchandise. The wives of these merchants often work as hair braiders in hair salons or in their homes.

Despite the pervasive fragmentation, interethnic tensions, and anti-immigrant sentiments in Southern California, Allen and Turner presented statistical analysis in 1997 that indicated several shifts in the social and geographic residential patterns in the Los Angeles metropolitan area. Throughout the 1990s, neighborhoods that were once dominated by one ethnic group have become more diverse in their ethnic make-up, as residents have moved into new areas and transformed the enclave settlement patterns. Secondly, Anglos, who were previously known for their patterns of suburban flight out of the city's center, tended to leave older suburban neighborhoods and move into more affluent suburbs. Those whites who did not move to more affluent neighborhoods were joined by residents of other ethnicities, resulting in more diverse neighborhoods, especially in outer suburban areas. Other whites moved out of Southern California entirely, as seen in the 10 percent drop in the white population during the 1990s. Third, Latinos have replaced whites in many of the older suburban neighborhoods and have also moved into formerly black residential areas in the central cities. Fourth, blacks have continued a pattern that has developed over two to three decades of decentralizing into nearby suburbs. Fifth, Asian immigrants tended to settle in Asian enclaves, while other Asians moved into affluent white neighborhoods, often creating new pan-Asian enclaves (Allen and Turner 2002:55).

Allen and Turner suggest that the social and geographic trends which occurred throughout the 1990s indicate a further transformation of Los Angeles towards a multi-ethnic

society, "a single society whose people simply vary in their ethnic heritage" and away from a collection of separate ethnic societies which are "weakly interconnected economically" but "not really integrated residentially, culturally, and socially" (1997:230). In their follow-up statistical analysis in 2002, Allen and Turner see even more movement towards a multi-ethnic society. "[T]he arrival of immigrants has infused Southern California with tremendous dynamism, economically and culturally. In some aspects of life, particularly in food, music, and entertainment, there has been much mixing of talent, ideas, and traditions. Many people have found that getting to know individuals in other groups is exhilarating and rewarding. The flows of money and people back and forth between Southern California and about a hundred countries make our region one of the world's centers of both international trade and ethnic diversity" (2002:57).

How do African immigrants figure into this cultural mosaic which Allen and Turner see as increasingly moving towards multi-ethnicity? On the one hand, African immigrants are dispersing and settling in outlying suburbs as well as older black neighborhoods, creating several pockets of concentration rather then distinct enclaves. On the other hand, scholars of the New African Diaspora give evidence which suggests that African immigrants are "acculturated but not assimilated," and that they "engage the host society selectively, confining their activities to carefully constructed zones, mainly educational and economic, that are vital for their survival in this country" (Arthur 2000:3). My ethnographic results support this claim, and therefore suggest that African immigrant communities reinforce the mosaic composition of Los Angeles rather than the melting pot or the multi-ethnic conception. As one Ghanaian immigrant stated in his address at a traditional Asante wedding

ceremony in L.A., "Even though we believe America is a melting pot, most of us say that it is a salad bowl. In a salad, everything is in there. You eat them together and everybody stays separate" (Adutwum 2001). It is apparent from the social history of African migration to the U.S. that first-generation African immigrant communities regard themselves as members of a salad rather than a stew and their performance practices at family ceremonies and ethnic and national celebrations support this premise. In terms of the urban ethnic geographic study of Allen and Turner, the case of African immigrants presents a phenomenon that must be configured within the social history of African citizens who see migration as a means to an end – an investment in a family's future. The second generation, the offspring of this generation of immigrants, seems to be engaging with Southern California, and America in general, in a somewhat different manner. The second generation has already begun to adapt different cultural processes in placing themselves in the social and cultural landscape of Southern California as they continue to negotiate the boundaries of their parents' culture and the one into which they were born. This is an area that will hopefully be taken up by other scholars.

Patterns of Immigration for Ghanaians and Senegalese

Ghanaians and Senegalese both belong to relatively small immigrant communities within the total population of Southern California. It is difficult to estimate the total number of persons of Ghanaian and Senegalese birth in the City of Los Angeles, Los Angeles County, or Southern California because of the limited demographic analytical data gathered by the U.S. Census. Under the category of "Place of Birth" of foreign-born persons in the

City of Los Angeles, the Los Angeles Almanac lists 666 persons of Ghanaian birth, but does not include Senegal as a category. The almanac lists only three countries under "Western Africa:" Ghana, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone. All the other countries are combined under the item, "Other Western Africa."[6] A more detailed report by the 2000 U.S. Census Bureau for the City of Los Angeles reports 530 persons of Ghanaian birth and 125 persons of Senegalese birth.[7] For Los Angeles County, the 2000 census figures report 1,074 persons of Ghanaian birth and 203 persons of Senegalese birth.[8] These census figures fail to reflect the actual number of residents of African birth because they do not include registered students or persons of undocumented status, two groups that make up a significant number of African immigrants. To counteract the lack of sufficient data by the official source, I asked local African association officers to estimate the number of persons from Ghana and Senegal in Los Angeles, since they are in positions of assisting new arrivals and keeping data bases of incoming immigrants from their home countries. Nana Osei-Tutu, the president of the Ghana Association of Southern California, estimates that there are approximately 6,000 Ghanaians and 3,000 Senegalese living in Los Angeles County (15 September 2002, personal communication). Another Ghanaian scholar, Attah-Poku, estimated that there were approximately 4,000 documented and undocumented Ghanaians in the Los Angeles metropolitan area in his study published in 1996 (1996:57).

[6] Los Angeles Almanac. www.losangelesalmanac.com/la/la03.htm
[7] U.S. Census Bureau 2000 report for persons of foreign birth in the City of Los Angeles. http://factfinder.census.gov/home/en/datanotes/expsf3.htm
[8] U.S. Census Bureau 2000 report for persons of foreign birth in the Los Angeles County. http://factfinder.census.gov/home/en/datanotes/expsf3.htm

My reasons for choosing Ghanaian and Senegalese immigrants for a comparative musical ethnography crystallize in the area of immigration to the U.S., precisely because Ghanaians and Senegalese have exhibited significantly different patterns of immigration to the U.S. during the mid-twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. People's reasons for immigrating abroad have grown out of specific political, social, and economic events and factors in their home countries. Many of these factors are related to their experiences with European colonizers. For example, in light of Ghana's long contact with the British during the colonial era from 1874 to 1957, and the introduction of English as Ghana's official language, Ghanaians began traveling to England in large numbers to attend university on scholarship in the late nineteenth century. As more Ghanaians became educated in the British system, an African elite class developed and its members became more involved in the colonial administration, earning seats in the Legislative Council (Salm and Falola 2002). This educated elite would soon become instrumental in moving Ghana towards independence, which they achieved in 1957.

Likewise, Senegal's contact with French colonizers and the French language made France the primary choice for Senegalese to travel in order to attend university, and later, to expand trade networks. During the colonial period in Senegal, from 1885 to 1945, the French colonial government created the Four Communes, a system which rewarded educated African elites with citizenship rights and the opportunity to hold political office. However, in contrast to the situation in Ghana, the development of an African elite class in the urban areas of Senegal was a central factor in the French government's attempt at assimilating Africans into French society and culture (Gellar 1995). It was precisely the resistant activities of Sufi

leaders such as Cheikh Amadou Bamba, along with the traditional authority of the inland marabouts which allowed Senegalese to wrest control from the French and achieve independence in 1960 (Gellar 1995, Buggenhagen 2003, Babou 2002).

Following independence, many Anglophone West Africans began setting their sights on the United States as a viable alternative for education and career advancement. Ghanaians began immigrating to North America in significant numbers around the mid-1960s and continued steadily with some fluctuations up until the present day (Arthur 2000). Meanwhile, Senegalese continued to settle in Paris and avoided immigrating to the U.S. until the 1980s, due in large part to the language barrier. Also, of the three main reasons that Africans immigrate the U.S. – education, business, and asylum – Ghanaians generally belong to the first category, and Senegalese to the second. Thus, while Ghanaians have consistently entered the U.S. as students and have tended to remain in the country after completing their studies, a fewer number of Senegalese have entered the country as students. The majority of Senegalese have established residences in order to expand global trade circuits that have centers in New York, Paris, Milan, Dakar, and Tokyo.

The mid-1960s was also a time of resistance and reform in the United States, when many Americans publicly resisted civil rights imbalances. During this time, major revisions were made in immigration laws to reverse certain discriminatory practices. Extant immigration policies were based on immigration laws of 1921 and 1924 that restricted admittance into the U.S. according to national origin. These quantitative laws established annual quotas based on nationality, favoring immigrants from western European nations and limiting immigrants from Third World countries. In fact, immigrants from the African

continent were limited to two percent of the total number of immigrants admitted annually (Adutwum, forthcoming). The 1965 Immigration Act "ceased denying entry based on race, nationality, or religion and gave preference to family reunification" (Canon 2000:31). Additional reforms in the 1980s and 1990s further lessened the restrictions on Africans entering the country. "The Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 made it possible for African students and professionals facing severe political and economic hardships at home to obtain permanent status in the U.S." (ibid.). The act of 1986 also granted amnesty to illegal aliens who had resided in the U.S. since January 1, 1982. This made a significant impact on the African immigrant population, because it allowed many immigrants with newly legalized status to bring family members from Africa into the country (Adutwum). Then in 1995, the INS adopted the Diversity Visa Lottery program, which provides 50,000 immigrant visas annually for randomly selected individuals from countries with normally low rates of immigration to the U.S. Those selected in the lottery are allowed to apply for permanent residence, which gives an individual the right to bring one's spouse and children into the country. The Diversity Visa Lottery program by far made the most significant and most immediate impact on the number of Africans immigrating to the U.S. In the two year period from 1994 to 1996, after the lottery was initiated in 1995, the number of African immigrants nearly doubled from 26,716 in 1994 to 52,889 in 1996 (Adutwum, Arthur). In fact, the year 1996 marks the highest number of African immigrants entering the country since the beginning of record keeping in 1820 (Canon 2000:33).

The immigration policies and reforms adopted during the second half of the twentieth century have facilitated a great increase of African immigrants entering the United States.

According to U.S. Census figures from 1970, 1980, 1990, and 2000, African immigration into the U.S. has steadily increased with some fluctuations since the 1970s (Arthur 2000). "In the one hundred years between the end of the Civil War and the Immigration Act of 1965, only sixty-five thousand African immigrants had come to the United States. In one ten-year period after the act's passage, 1987-1996, over three hundred thousand immigrants came from forty African countries" (Ashabranner 1999:20 qtd. in Canon 2000:31-32).

Ghanaian Emigration to the U.S.

The movement of Ghanaians in significant numbers to the United States can be traced in three phases. During the first phase, from the 1960s through the 1970s, the U.S. was one destination among a host of other western locales including England, Canada, China, Scandinavia, the Soviet Union, and the Eastern bloc, to which young Ghanaians migrated directly to pursue higher education. This wave of immigration was situated in a massive attempt by several West African countries, most notably Ghana and Nigeria, to develop their newly independent countries. The African nations sponsored students to acquire education in the West with the expectation that the educated and trained Africans would "return home and contribute to the social, economic, cultural, and political development of their countries" (Arthur 2000:36). A fair number of educated Ghanaians did return home and secure employment. In the midst of some socio-economic and cultural advances in the country, the repatriates enjoyed a modest increase in the standard of living, and developed into a small professional middle class (Arthur).

However, the road to development turned rocky as myriad internal political and economic problems soon forced people to find economic opportunities abroad. Ghanaian citizens became burdened by unceasing social and political problems such as poverty, political corruption, intra-ethnic wars and conflicts resulting from arbitrary national borders during colonialism, unstable political institutions, governmental intolerance towards resistance or dissent, terrorism towards women and children, drought, low agricultural production, rising fertility levels, and the lack of political or economic security by the governments. Ghana's rising problems paralleled those of many West African developing countries during this period of post-colonialism. Ironically, most of the problems stemmed from the post-colonial relationship between the African and European countries, in which newly independent nations became indebted and dependent on the metropoles.

Amidst this economic and political climate, the second phase of Ghanaian immigration to the U.S. commenced. In the late 1970s through the 1980s, massive numbers of educated individuals, members of the professional class, and civil servants immigrated abroad to escape the corruption and decline in their country and seek economic advancement in America. The period is characterized as Africa's "brain drain." Thus, what began as an attempt to develop the new nations by educating its citizens abroad detoured into an exodus of talented, educated, and skilled people seeking a better and more secure life for themselves and their families. Also in the late 1970s, many Ghanaians workers emigrated to nearby Nigeria during Nigeria's oil boom. Later, in the early 1980s, when Nigeria's economy was faltering, the country expelled many Ghanaians (Peil 1995), creating a glut of unemployed workers in Ghana.

According to John Collins, the social and political conditions in Ghana in the late 1970s and early 1980s pressured many Ghanaian musicians to leave the country to seek work. Those who remained significantly reshaped the direction of Ghanaian popular music. The first factor involved the economic decline during the Acheampong-Akkufo military regime that sent many musicians out of the country in search of work (Collins 2002c). During this period, the Ghanaian musicians union went on strike, protesting the unfair distribution of earnings through the music business's patron-musician relationship (Ewens 1991:206). The second factor involved the period following the military regime during which a strict night curfew, from 1982 to 1984, severely limited the work of live performers. Also, a luxury import tax on musical instruments curtailed the work of professional bands (Collins 2002c). Those musicians who remained in Ghana found rare opportunities to perform and record in the African independent churches, which relied on dancing as part of their worship. Additionally, the church, free from the import tax, provided a solace for musicians to perform and record. The music which developed in the church blended traditional styles, popular forms, and religious themes, resulting in a new genre called gospel highlife (Collins 2002c). The incorporation of music and dance in the independent Christian churches also opened up opportunities for women in Ghana to contribute their voices to highlife, whereas highlife had previously been a male preoccupation. The new version of gospel highlife music, with its concentration on religious and spiritual lyrics, and its easy appropriation into independent worship services and outreach, provided a forum for women singers to become involved. In fact, Collins suggests that Ghanaian gospel became dominated by women singers in the 1980s and 1990s. He attributes this to the fact that families who would previously not allow

their daughters to be involved with popular music and its "lowlife" associations, were more willing to let them sing in church-related activities.

Some of the musicians and dancers who fled Ghana during the 1970s and 1980s came to the U.S. as members of African music and dance troupes who were engaged in world tours. While on tour, many performers decided to take their chances and stay in America, rather than return home. Many of the musicians who made their way to Los Angeles during this period came expressly to pursue a career in music, expecting to find performing and teaching opportunities. Some of these musicians were not born into a musical lineage and were often discouraged by their families to pursue a music career. Some very notable Ghanaian musicians have made Los Angeles their home and continue to travel back and forth between Ghana and the U.S. Among these are the highlife jazz great Blay Gyedu Ambolley, reggae superstar Rocky Dawuni, original Osibisa drummer Remi Kabaka, and Fante guitarist and singer Ebo Tumi Ansah.

Other Ghanaian musicians who were born into a musical family came to Los Angeles through appointments to teach African traditional music at colleges and universities and remained in the country after their appointments had expired. Agya Akwasi Badu was recruited in 1968 by Mantle Hood and Kwabena Nketia to teach African drumming at UCLA's Music department. Badu had been a prominent musician in Ghana, having been the chief drummer for the Asante royal court under Nana Sir Osei Agyemang Prempeh II. Later he founded a drumming school at the Kumasi Cultural Center. In Los Angeles, Badu became a well-rounded and respected performer and teacher. In addition to performing at the university and in the public sphere, Badu was also active in the Asante community, holding

the position as chief drummer for the Asante Cultural Society of Southern California until his death. Anlo-Ewe master drummer Kwashi Amevuvor came to Los Angeles in the early 1980s after teaching African music and dance at State University of New York, Brockport for four years. Prior to coming to the U.S. for his SUNY appointment, Amevuvor left Ghana and taught workshops and performed traditional Ghanaian music at various universities and cultural centers in Europe, including Aberdeen, London, Rome, Vienna, Austria, Zurich, Switzerland, and Germany. During the 1980s, Amevuvor became instrumental in developing the world music scene in Southern California. He was a primary force in instigating the renown African Beat radio program which played on KCRW-FM for over ten years. He formed a musical group called Sankofa which would later become the popular world beat band, The Bonedaddys. Kwashi also appeared and drummed in the films *The Color Purple* (1985) and *Coming to America* (1988). Amevuvor continues to teach private lessons, workshops, and clinics and perform at African music festivals. As an elder of the community, he often offers libations at African-themed public events and Ghanaian family celebrations including naming ceremonies, weddings, and funerals.

Then, there are the members of the extraordinary Anlo-Ewe musical family, the Ladzekpos, who secured teaching appointments in Southern California in the 1970s that have continued to the present day. Drummer Kobla Ladzekpo was appointed to take over the African music ensemble at UCLA in 1976 and continues to lead the Music and Dance of Ghana Ensemble in UCLA's ethnomusicology department. Along with his brother Alfred, Professor Ladzekpo also co-directs the African Music and Dance Ensemble at the California Institute of the Arts. Kobla and his wife, Dzidzorgbe Beatrice Lawluvi-Ladzekpo, also lead

their own ensemble, the Zadonu African Music and Dance Company, and operate a record label, Zadonu Records. Rounding out the family of talented music professionals is younger brother, C.K. Ladzekpo, who directs the African Music Ensemble at the University of California, Berkeley. The Ladzekpos extend their reach beyond the university environment and perform for festivals, conferences, and workshops in California and around the world.

Phase three of Ghanaian immigration to the U.S. includes the 1990s to the present day. The current movement of Ghanaians to America occurs in a chain migration, through which people first move to another African country and/or a European destination, and work in order to save enough money to come to America. Whereas Ghanaians previously came to America directly to pursue higher education, today they are more likely to embark on a transnational journey which takes them to several foreign locales before lighting in an American city. During the current phase, the predominant mode of admittance of Africans in general into the U.S. is by family re-unification. In 1996, of the 52,889 Africans admitted into the U.S., "5,153 came under family-sponsored preferences, 16,158 were admitted as immediate relatives of U.S. citizens, and another 4,945 entered under employment-based initiatives" (Arthur 2000:42). My research found that Ghanaians creatively build on their insular communities in Los Angeles and other U.S. cities by taking advantage of the family reunification process. Upon securing residency in a city such as Los Angeles, a Ghanaian man or woman will often travel back to Ghana to find a spouse and then bring their new spouse to join them in the U.S. In one respect, this transnational wave of immigrants would appear much less educated than previous constituencies, since the majority has not entered directly for higher education. However, Ghanaians continue to be among the most educated

of the total immigrants in the U.S., partly because as Ghanaians with U.S. residency status sponsor other family members to join them in America, they strategically choose family members who have at least post-secondary education and adequate job skills (Arthur).

The situation for African performers in the current phase of immigration has been exceedingly difficult. This is fundamentally due to new discriminatory practices which have taken effect in response to the terror attacks in New York City on September 11, 2001. Following 9-11, a blanket of distrust and suspicion of foreign citizens, especially people of color or Muslim practice, has led to the denial of hundreds of Visas for performing artists who were scheduled to visit America to perform. Some musicians have been able to enter the country through family reunification or education. Drummer Marwan Mograbi came to Los Angeles in November of 2000, after teaching and performing in Germany for five years. While attending school at the University of Ghana, Legon, in the mid-1990s, Mograbi met and married a German exchange student and went back with her to Germany. There, he established an African cultural organization and performed and acted for a theatre group. When his wife was accepted at a graduate program in Los Angeles, he came with her. He now teaches music at a private school for the Orff Program, which uses an integrative system of body rhythms, snapping, clapping, and call and response to teach music to children. In between playing percussion for Rocky Dawuni's band, Mograbi has struggled to keep an African traditional music group together in Los Angeles. He says, "I'm still fighting it. I'm still doing it. I could go into the studio and get signed up by any musician and sing, 'Baby, I love you. If I don't see you, I can't sleep. Oh, give me honey on my lips, make me happy, cherry boom boom, bam bam.' I get signed, I can say, 'Oh, kill your mother and ba ba ba...'

That's one thing, but I don't want that. So I don't have the money there, but I'm still happy when I get a stage to show my act" (15 March 2004, personal communication).

Senegalese Emigration to the U.S.

The history of Senegalese immigration to the United States reflects a markedly different set of patterns and strategies than Ghanaian immigration. There are two key issues for understanding the recent history of Senegalese immigration to the U.S., and more specifically, to Los Angeles. The first issue involves the migratory patterns of Mouride and other merchants which is best understood as a business strategy which links global commercial spaces to Senegalese urban centers. The second concerns the migratory patterns of Senegalese musicians and dancers in response to the commercialization of traditional African music and dance and the western interest in world music, which peaked in the late 1980s, creating new opportunities for Senegalese musicians to teach and perform for western audiences.

A small percentage of Senegalese immigrants in Los Angeles are students, professionals, teachers, musicians, and dancers. The great majority of Senegalese immigrants are Mourides who make their living as street venders in downtown Los Angeles and generally travel a regional and seasonal global trade circuit. It should be noted that not all merchants are Mouride, and not all Mourides are merchants. Some Senegalese immigrants are Tijan, or followers of the Tijaniyya sufi order, while a very small percentage are Christian. Seasoned travelers and specialists in the flow of import and export, Mouride venders are also known as *bana-bana* or *Modou-Modou*. The latter term refers to Amadou

Bamba's son, Mamadou "Modou" Moustapha, "the Caliph who initiated construction of the Great Mosque and founded the Grand Magal" (M. Diouf 2000:695 cited in Roberts and Roberts 2000:240; Ebin 1996:96). To Mouride merchants, the name Modou-Modou is associated with "a type of socio-economic behavior, a spirit of enterprise and initiative" (M. Ndiaye 1998:24 cited in Roberts and Roberts 2000:240; Ebin 1996:96), which systematically equates hard work and self-sacrifice with Mouride devotional practice.

The Mouride sufi order is specific to Senegal, but since the mid-twentieth century, its adherents have developed a trading diaspora which connects numerous global cities to Dakar through merchandising and the flow of regular remittances to the Holy City of Touba, as well as to family households in Senegal. How did this modest religious order grow into a dynamic global network in less than a half-century?

Islam was in the Senegambian region since the eleventh century and became almost completely rooted in Senegal by the end of the eighteenth century, when militant Muslims leaned on Wolof kingdoms and nearly destroyed them by the middle of the nineteenth century (Cruise O'Brien 1971:13; Ebin 1996:94). During this period of religious and social upheaval between the mid-eighteenth to early nineteenth centuries, the Qadiriyya and Tijaniyya brotherhoods, or *tariqas*, took hold (Cruise O'Brien 1971:27; Ebin 1996:94). The sufi orders were organized around Islamic saints, who assisted the discples, or *taalibes*, to gain a measured amount of *baraka*, or grace, in exchange for their veneration and their duty in the five pillars of Islam. Eventually, with the emergence of Mouridism, the sufi saints also exercised a more political role by helping to unify people in resistance against the French colonizers and the "animist" aristocrats (Ebin 1996:94).

The Mouride brotherhood emerged at the turn of the twentieth century, at a time of multiple crises in Senegal, including years of internal warfare between Wolof kings and Muslim state builders, the domination by French colonialists, and the French imposition of cash-crop agriculture (Copans 1972:19-33 cited in Diop 1984:46 cited in Ebin 1996:94; Babou 2002:152). Senegal, being the first West African country to be colonized by Europeans, was under French domination by the 1890s. The French instigated rapid socio-economic expansion and political transformation by creating a large peanut farming economy and dividing the extant kingdoms into provinces (Babou 2002).

Around 1884, Cheikh Amadou Bamba Mbacké (1857-1927), a marabout, or holy man, from a learned family, emerged as a prolific writer of religious poetry and a voracious student of Islamic teachings. Bamba began attracting a large following of artisans, traders, and slaves to his doctrine (Ebin 1996:94). Bamba based his teachings on practice over ideology, on hard work over intellectualism. His system of education was based on *tarbiyya*, a combination of instruction, manual work, and prayers (Ebin 1996, Babou 2002). Bamba's following grew in west-central Senegal to include multiple strata of society. His followers in the lower castes appreciated the doctrine of hard work for salvation, and his aristocratic followers used Mouridism as a non-violent force of resistance against colonial rule (Babou 2002).

Initially, the French government tried to squash Bamba's powerful and expanding influence over the people by arresting him and sending him into exile to Gabon, then to Mauritania, and then placed him under house arrest for years in remote Senegal. But Bamba's popularity only intensified during his time in exile, through the spread of local legends

describing miracles that he performed while in exile. By 1912, the French warmed to the Mourides and decided to appropriate Bamba's influence for their own advantage by collaborating with him (Babou 2002, Ebin 1996). The Mourides became a viable economic community organized into work groups, and ended up producing one-quarter of the country's peanut crop (Ebin 1996).

During the second half of the twentieth century, Mourides extended their reach and experienced a rapidly increasing urbanization. After World War II, Mourides began migrating from rural farms to Senegalese cities and then other African urban centers to seek out other commercial interests. Mouride traders started migrating to European cities in the late 1960s and only started moving to the U.S. in significant numbers in 1984 to 1985 (Babou 2002). One suggestion for the move to the U.S. is the growing Afrocentric interest in African products and culture which created an incentive for traders. But Babou insists that a greater instigator in expanding the Mouride market to the U.S. was the French government's drastic shift in immigration laws, coupled with a drought in Senegal in the late 1970s and early 1980s which caused a drop in peanut prices.

The first Mourides who arrived in America in the late 1970s were already experienced traders across Europe and Africa. They stayed temporarily in New York hotels, selling masks and other cultural products. To complete the circuit of exchange, they collected African American cosmetics such as Ultra-sheen and hair extensions (Ebin 1996:98) and other luxury items to take back to Senegal for resale. This first small group of traders established a precedent in New York City for the next wave of migrants in the mid-1980s, who became permanent immigrants. The second group of vendors specialized in selling

luxury items such as watches, umbrellas, sunglasses, T-shirts, and hats instead of the antique and Afrocentric items of their predecessors. Many of them also worked as cab drivers to make extra money. Gradually, by the early 1990s, Mouride traders expanded into other business ventures such as shipping, travel arranging, and transferring remittances (Babou 2002).

Researchers predicted that the Muridiyya, being a rural phenomenon, would weaken during the context of increasing urbanization, western education, and capitalism. However, Mourides have expanded even further through migration to other cities in out outside of Africa, and have engendered a cohesion and stability in their brotherhoods unmatched by other Senegalese Muslim groups. Babou postulates that the increase of solidarity is due not to external factors, as others would suggest, but to internal characteristics of the brotherhood. He suggests that the formation of *da'iras*, or prayer circles, in the Diaspora has contributed to the cohesion of the Mouride brotherhood. With peanut cultivation no longer providing the base for the Senegalese economy, the sect shifted its productivity from rural farming to urban merchandising. As Mourides established immigrant communities in urban centers such as New York and Los Angeles, the da'iras have provided a locus to solidify their ties amongst fellow taalibes and focus their energies on Touba (Babou 2002).

Da'iras were originally formed by Mourides who migrated from rural areas to cities in Senegal, but with increased travel for trading, they now operate as meeting places for itinerate Mourides abroad. "The Mouride da'ira (Arabic pl. dawa'ir, circle, association) is crucial in maintaining contact with his cheikh and with Touba" (Ebin 1996:95). Each da'ira honors a particular cheikh. Taalibes hold regular meetings at which they sing *qasa'ids* (poems

by Amadou Bamba), eat together, and discuss business and travel. The officers keep in close contact with cheikhs in Senegal and regularly send money from the da'ira to the cheikh or the khalifa-general. Currently, as Mourides work more in urban centers, adherents continue to donate money to the cheikhs every Wednesday, "emphasizing the relationship between the cheikh and the taalibe" (Ebin 1996:95) by re-inscribing the tradition of the taalibe working for the cheikh on Wednesdays.

Mourides have always been migrants. In the early days when disciples of the sufi order worked on rural farms, cheikhs migrated with their taalibes to scout for new land for farming. Travel emphasizes the ties with their founding saint, who believed that travel was important for testing one's faith and who himself traveled extensively. Today, Mourides in Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, and other cities consider themselves in exile, just as Cheikh Amadou Bamba was in exile in Gabon (Ebin 1996). Travel and migration are also reflected in the rhetoric and tenets of the brotherhood's history. "They say travel leads to knowledge, *xam-xam*, which is essential to a young man's education," and thus, "travel has become an almost sacred activity for Mourides" (Ebin 1996:98). In fact, the crucial pilgrimage for Mourides abroad is the annual Magal festival in April, which marks the anniversary of Amadou Bamba's return from exile, and takes place at his sacred mosque in Touba (Ebin 1996). Mourides maintain essential ties with Senegal through the Holy City of Touba, where Amadou Bamba is buried. But Touba is never really far away for Mourides. While it is the central location of spirituality, knowledge, and work, Touba is "infinitely reproducible" (Ebin 1996:100). Wherever Mourides travel, they say Touba is with them, in their hearts, and as "a state of mind" (ibid.). If Mourides abroad are unable to attend the

annual Magal, they celebrate the festival in their immigrant communities, in Touba-Los Angeles, Touba-New York, Touba-Chicago, Touba-Paris, or wherever Mourides are gathered.

Senegalese musicians and dancers discovered Los Angeles while on tour in the 1980s during the heyday of world music. An obvious and growing interest in traditional African music and African popular music in the U.S. during the 1980s and 1990s created a fertile ground for African touring acts. While Los Angeles emitted an allure for many musicians while on tour, the move from the west coast of Africa to the west coast of California did not occur in a direct route, but in a stepwise transnational movement. Today, a few accomplished Senegalese musicians have made Los Angeles their primary residence. With the same work ethic and devotion to their craft as Mouride traders, these musicians juggle performing, recording, and teaching African drums and dance to mostly American students. They also perform for Senegalese family ceremonies and national celebrations throughout the calendar year. To maintain a balance between their cultural identity and their need to survive, Senegalese musicians and dancers in Los Angeles constantly switch their musical focus between the Senegalese immigrant community and the members of the dominant culture.

Senegalese drummer Malik Sow has carved a deep niche for himself as a performer, teacher, choreographer, and actor in Los Angeles. He first performed in the U.S. in 1984 with the National Dance Company of Senegal at the Epcot Center at Walt Disney World in Florida. He returned to Senegal and created another group with sixteen other musicians, which he brought to New York. Originally trained in chemistry at Université Cheikh Anta Diop in Senegal and Université Charles de Gaulle in Paris, Malik Sow secured a job as a

chemist at Buffalo State College in New York. Thus, he coordinated his new dual life in America as both a performer and a scientist. Sow's dual interests are reflected in his upbringing, as described in his biography by Janet Planet.

> Master Drummer, Composer, and Choreographer Malik Sow, born in Dakar, the capital city of Senegal, hails from the Fulani ethnic group of West Africa. Malik's father was a French Marine of a noble family who swept the beautiful singer and dancer of a griot family off her feet marrying her soon after. Malik followed in his mother's footsteps and became a performer of traditional music from the ancient Malian empire - which today includes the West African countries of Senegal, Mali, Guinea, Gambia, Cote D'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, and Cameroon. As a young boy in Senegal, Malik studied with Master Drummer Doussou Koulibaly, and Master Dancer Karounga Sakho. In 1970 Malik began a stint as lead drummer with the Ballet d'Afrique Noire, three years later Malik was honored to become the Musical Director for the National Ballet of Senegal, a position he kept for almost ten years, and which led to his becoming the Director and Choreographer for the prestigious Les Ballets Africains, who have performed continuously around the world and are still considered to be one of Africa's most important and influential cultural performing groups (Planet 2001-2003).

Malik Sow soon tired of the cold weather in New York and packed up and moved to Los Angeles in 1989. He says, "I never had a chance to work as a chemist. When I came here there was a little starving of culture, of drumming and dancing, and it occupied all my time. And after two weeks, I was already hired to do the movie with Janet Jackson, *Poetic Justice*," in which he acted and played on the soundtrack (28 October 2002, personal communication).

He quickly found more musical work with workshops, concerts, recordings, and films, including the Steven Spielberg production, *Amistad*. Today, Sow teaches African music in public schools through an appointment with the Music Center, along with regular classes in djembe and dun dun at local music stores and dance studios. In addition to teaching, he is the music director of a West African dance ensemble in Los Angeles called Mussukeba Sane. He also choreographs commissioned works for professional dance troupes such as Dundu Dole in New York, Kuumba Dancers and Drummers in Tampa, Florida, and Kankuran in Washington, D. C.

I asked Malik about the difference in repertoire in his teaching and his performing group. He said, "I have my private group of drummers that I get together and play some authentic rhythms. But, if you go to a class most of the time people want to learn *domba*, *kuku*, *mandiani*, *lamba*. They don't want to move up and sometimes it can become boring. They want to learn lamba for a year. I say, 'Come on, this is a one week learning and you move for the next.' So we build those guys, 'OK, you guys can you hear. Let's try and do more.' You try to bring some of what you have in your bag, and either they don't hear it, it's not coming out the way you want it. When you warm now, you say, 'OK guys, let's go.' They tired, finger hurt, Oh I got an appointment" (28 October 2002, personal communication). Still, Sow is content with choosing music over science. "I could go to a lab and make much more money and be living in Beverly Hills, but this is what I love. Even if I happened not to be born in Africa, I think I would be a drummer, because I love drumming. I love sound. I love the beat. You see, it's like a heart. If you wake up in the morning, your drum don't beat, you're kaput" (ibid.).

Aziz Faye is another prominent Senegalese drummer and dancer who has made Los Angeles his primary base. As the music director of the sabar group, Xhaley Nguewel ("Young Griots"), Faye is a high profile performer and teacher in Los Angeles and around the world. As a géwël, Faye is obligated to perform for Senegalese immigrant family ceremonies and other cultural events. His sabar group performs regularly at events such as Senegal Independence Day, Senegal Women's Association parties, and occasionally at private family ceremonies, but they can also be seen at nightclubs such as the Temple Bar in Santa Monica. Thus, he balances his time and talents between the public and private realms of society. Raised in the village of Medina, the ngéwël suburb of Dakar, Faye is the son of sabar master Sing Sing Faye and a protégé of percussion virtuoso Doudou N'Diaye Rose. From the age of six, Aziz Faye performed with other members of his musical family in Le Ballet Sing Sing Rhythm, both dancing and drumming, and later performed with the National Ballet of Senegal. Faye has also toured with a number of world renowned mbalax artists including Youssou N'Dour, Fallou Diene, Baaba Maal, and brother, Mbaye Dieye Faye, and recorded with Peter Gabriel and Ismaël Lo.

For the past five years, Aziz Faye has produced an annual West African Dance and Drum Conference, which features five days of classes in Senegalese, Guinean, and Malian dance and drumming at Debbie Allen's Dance Academy in Culver City and culminates in a cultural celebration, a Safsafal, at the Senegalese restaurant, Bistro 4040. Faye brings in twenty artists from West Africa, several of whom already reside in Southern California, to teach the classes. At the 2003 conference, the line-up of dance teachers included Marie Basse-Wiles, Alseney Soumah, Malang Bayo, Babacar M'Baye, N'Deye Gueye, Riche Faye,

Mareme Faye, and Aziz Faye. The drum instructors included M'Bore Faye, Cheikh M'Baye, Alioumane Faye, Adama Diop, Karamba Dambakete, Malik Sow, Ousmane Gueye, Mar Gueye, and Oumar M'Boup.

How Out-Migration Has Affected Ghana and Senegal

The different patterns of immigration by Ghanaians and Senegalese have affected not only the host environments in which they settle, but have transformed the lives of the remaining family members and wider communities in Ghana and Senegal. Out-migration has done more than set up a new life for the immigrants who are on the move. It also fundamentally impacts the families and transforms the communities and societies from which people migrate. As Africans establish satellite communities in the Diaspora, they continually retrace the circuits which connect the diasporic spaces both materially, by sending regular remittances home to Africa and exchanging images (via videotapes), products, and cultural goods back and forth, and symbolically, by performing rituals which are given meaning through particular styles of music and dance performance, orality, food, and clothing. Beth Buggenhagen has shown how the recent development of a Senegalese Mouride Diaspora has effectively changed the balance of power in domestic households in Senegal and transformed the social capital of people who are touched by new products and new money. This is evident in Senegalese women's displays of wealth and largesse during family rituals such as naming ceremonies and weddings in Senegal (Buggenhagen 2003).

Similarly, Ghanaians have long been embroiled in a "brain drain" from their home country to more affluent locales in the U.S. and Europe. Once Ghanaians obtain education

and employment, it is extremely difficult to return to Ghana and acquire a comparable living wage. Instead, Ghanaian immigrants have established themselves in mostly middle class professional jobs and have created a flow of monies via Western Union, with a regular percentage of their incomes going as remittances to their families in Ghana, along with extra money in times of dire need, such as a family funeral. Much has been said about how the brain drain has had deleterious effects on Ghana's economy by depleting the country of so many educated and skilled workers (see Apraku 1991, Peil 1995, Arthur 2000, Akyeampong 2000). However, there have been few reports or investigations on how the influx of remittances and western products have transformed Ghana's economy, cultural practices, or social relations. Recently, President John Kuffour of Ghana visited the Ghanaian community of Los Angeles during a brief stop-over between Europe and Japan. He reported to the crowd that the remittances provided by Ghanaian immigrants in the Diaspora currently make up the largest economic contribution in the country. Certainly beyond the scope of this dissertation, the phenomenon of how Ghanaian out-migration and consequential flow of remittances have affected the social and cultural make-up of Ghana has only recently been taken up by scholars (see Lothar Smith and Valentina Mazzucato 2003, Alex B. Asiedu 2003).

Apart from the obligation to help finance families in Africa through remittances, Senegalese and Ghanaians cite similar reasons for leaving Africa and for coming to America. The most common reasons for leaving Africa include a desire to escape political corruption and atrophied job markets. The reasons Africans cite for coming to America are to take advantage of the education and career opportunities that are lacking at home. Also, Africans immigrate to U.S. cities to reunite with family members who have already settled there and in

some cases, have attained citizenship. John Arthur says, "The possibility of reuniting with family members is a major reason for acquiring American citizenship. Citizenship also carries with it status and prestige among extended family members in the country of origin. Immigrants who have naturalized tell stories about how parents and relatives at home in Africa boast about their accomplishments" (2000:133). Coastal West Africans from Ghana and Senegal are initially attracted to Southern California for its physical features which remind them of home, including the temperate Mediterranean climate, beaches, palm trees, and tropical plants and flowers. They also imagine that Los Angeles will provide certain things which may be out of their reach in West Africa, such as a broader range of choices in higher education and career.[9]

African Immigrant and African American Relations

While Africans have generally settled in African American residential neighborhoods and outlying multi-ethnic suburbs of Los Angeles, the ethnographic data shows that most first generation African immigrants resist assimilating with African Americans culturally, due to their perceived differences in cultural practices and values. Despite the small percentage of successful intermarriages between African Americans and African immigrants, the consensus is that "a wide gap exists between the two groups" which is filtered through "simmering hostility and misunderstanding between them" (Arthur 2000:77). And although most

[9] These opinions are based on personal interviews with Ghanaian and Senegalese immigrants in Los Angeles, along with a questionnaire which I gave to Ghanaian and Senegalese immigrants. My questionnaire was based on a questionnaire administered by John Arthur to West African immigrants in the southern and eastern United States, the results of which he analyzes in his book, *Invisible Sojourners* (2000).

American-born blacks regard Africa as their ancestral and spiritual homeland, seeds of distrust and misunderstandings are deepened through stereotypes on both sides. The conclusion of many is that "sharing the common physical characteristic of skin color has not ensured cultural and economic unity between [them]" (Arthur 2000:77-78).

According to a study by Waters and Kasinitz (1992), African immigrants see black Americans as "lazy, disorganized, obsessed with racial images, and having a laissez-faire attitude toward family life and child raising" (Arthur 2000:78). Therefore, most African immigrants claim to distance themselves from African Americans in order to build a reputation as being educated, hard working individuals and resist the stereotypes attributed to African Americans which may limit their social opportunities. Many African-born immigrants have stated that black Americans should stop blaming the "white man" for their situation and instead, take full advantage of the economic and educational opportunities which America offers (Arthur 2000:78). On the other hand, American-born blacks characterize African immigrants as "arrogant and oblivious to the racial tensions between blacks and whites" (ibid.). Black Americans also generate stereotypes about Africans as being primitive, tribal, animalistic, and involved in black magic, stereotypes which have been exhaustively perpetuated in the media. Yet, many African Americans also resent African immigrants for aligning themselves more with white social systems, such as educational institutions and career advancement. The key issue in African and African American relations is that each group attaches a relatively different value on race "as affecting advancement in the United States" (Arthur 2000:79).

While most African immigrants resist assimilating with African American culture, their American-born children are more likely to do so, due to the increased social contact between the children at school and after-school activities. Many African immigrants express alarm over their children adopting African American cultural norms such as wearing hip hop clothing styles, listening to hip hop music, and speaking with an African American accent. "While parents try to replicate African socialization, however, their teenage children tend to adopt American cultural images and identities. This can be seen in clothing styles, language, food, music, dating, and sexual behavior" (Arthur 2000:113). Parents feel that the values and attitudes associated with African American youth culture threaten the African traditional values they teach at home, including an emphasis on respect for elders and a strong work ethic. African parents restrict their children's interaction with American minority children, because they associate these youth with crime, violence, drop-outs, drugs, teen pregnancy, disrespect for authority (Arthur 2000). They also feel that assimilating with African American culture denotes a form of "downward assimilation" since African Americans are generally subject to racial discrimination and are granted fewer educational, career, and social opportunities in American society.

Second-generation African children, in order to avoid being ostracized or beaten up, often hide their African heritage and identity and try to become absorbed into black American culture and identity. Parents fear that their children are becoming too assimilated into the black American culture, which in their view contradicts African values and social responsibilities. Families experience internal rifts when adolescents, attracted to urban hip hop music and lifestyles, show obvious signs of decrease in their studies and household

responsibilities. Parents fear that the African values they try to instill in their children are "being weakened and devalued by the second generation. For this second generation, their survival in America will be influenced in large part by how they define their ethnicity and the relationships that they are able to establish with the dominant society or with other minorities in the United States" (Arthur 2000:117).

Conclusion

This chapter has explored how Ghanaian and Senegalese immigrants figure into the extremely diverse multicultural social mix of Southern California. Whereas Los Angeles has had a long history of immigration and is currently 41 percent foreign-born, African immigrants remain on the fringes of the discourse, and indeed in the social, geographic make-up of the area by creating scattered pockets of concentration, rather than distinct enclaves. Despite increasing diversity and a move towards a multi-ethnic society, as suggested by urban geographers Allen and Turner, African immigrants tend to resist assimilating into the dominant society as well as black American society. Instead of assimilating, African immigrants build cultural and social ties among like-identified groups in their own extended family, ethnic group, and national group. They maintain kinship bonds across the Atlantic both materially, through sending regular remittances to their families and communities at home in Africa, and symbolically, through practicing expressive forms such as music, dance, costumes, language, and cuisine which accentuate family ties and reinscribe ethnic, national, and religious identities.

Despite several years, and in some cases, decades of settlement in Los Angeles, the majority of African-born immigrants regard their time in the U.S. as temporary. Their aim in coming to America is not to assimilate into American culture, but to help advance their families and communities in Africa. "Africans are driven by the desire to succeed materially and are bonded together by one collective dream: to improve upon their lives and the lives of their extended family members at home and to assist in the economic development of their home countries . . . Consciousness of their African identity and heritage sustains them in their quest for a better life" (Arthur 2000:142) (see also Piel, Swigart, Apraku).

In addition to living transnationally between African and American spaces, many people, after living in the U.S. for several years, express deep regret for having left Africa. Their chief complaints about America are that it is unsafe and it lacks a sense of family, community, moral values, and a spiritual foundation. Africans admit that their remorse grows out of an awareness which sharply contradicts the years of mediated images from which they processed a picture of America. The Senegalese drummer, Malik Sow, expressed to me,

> When I was a child and growing up, I was always told that when you walk in the United States, you walk on gold, everywhere there's gold, and I kept it on my brain. And when I landed in JFK, I came out right away from the airport and I went out. My eyes was big like doughnuts, but I did not see no gold. And the same night, I went to Harlem, I saw people, they were more poor than the people in Africa. So I had to adjust whatever I had scanned on my head, to now saying to myself, 'I'm in a new situation, I need to take a new position.' That's the same thing, those information coming from there to here,

> because they always show that we're half naked, we're living in trees (28 October 2002, personal communication).

An officer of the United African Federation in Los Angeles, who immigrated from Congo said, "I know now that I've made a terrible mistake by coming to America. After living here for ten years, I would tell any African the truth about America and beg them not to come. In Africa, we all think that Americans are all rich and free, and I know that that is a lie. And I regret coming" (2003, personal communication). A Namibian graduate student in business administration, who was also waitressing at an African restaurant, had lived in L.A. for a year and two months. When I asked her if she planned to stay here or go home to work, she replied, "My heart is in Africa. I will have to go home" (2003, personal communication).

To counteract the feelings of regret and alienation, African immigrants focus their energies on educative and economic pursuits that will improve the situation of their immediate families and extended families back in Africa. A Senegalese merchant who has developed his own sideline businesses of videotaping family ceremonies and association parties explained to me,

> Our parents raised us to be disciplined, to work very hard. That is why, though I'm living here in L.A., there are so many things I could be doing. I could go and drink, go to bars, bring a lady home, go to a hotel, spend money, but I don't do any of those things. I don't go out. I go to work and come home. I have my prayer mat there. On the shelf I have my Qur'an. I eat, pray, and work on my videos. Then I save my money and buy things that I want. I like electronics (15 July 2003, personal communication).

The fruits of his hard work and discipline are obvious. In his apartment he has a big screen TV, a computer, a printer, a Sony VX2000 camcorder, a stereo, and a VCR.

African immigrants work to maintain a sense of community among those of the same family, ethnic group, and nationality. They organize through African associations, church or prayer groups, and businesses. They experience a continuity of tradition and social relationships by performing lifecycle events, such as naming ceremonies, weddings, and funerals. They often mediate between families and communities through circulating videotapes of family rituals. Ghanaians and Senegalese have been creating insular communities in Southern California, not necessarily by proximity but through cultural practice, based on like-identified membership in a family, ethnic group, or nation. In the following chapters, I will present ethnographic evidence which illustrates how African immigrants from Ghana and Senegal use music and dance performance at ethnic and national events and family lifecycle ceremonies, to accentuate the links and kinship ties between families across the Atlantic.

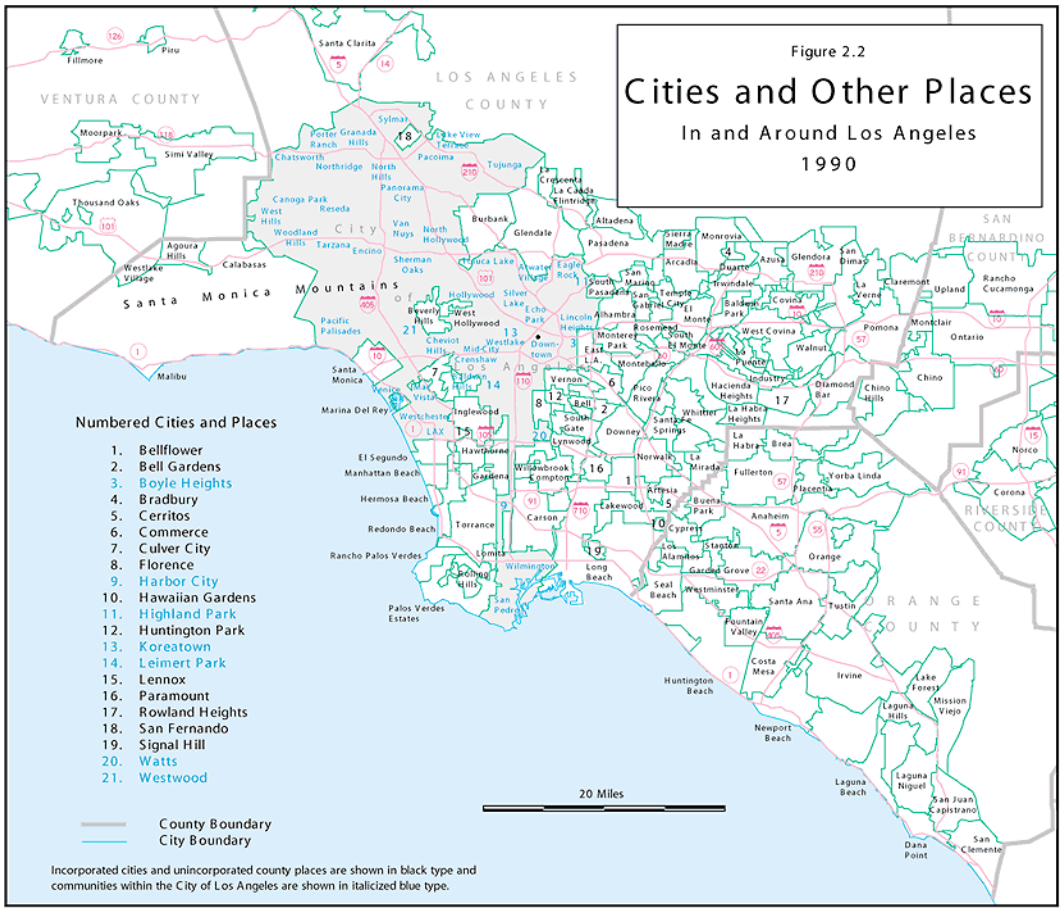

Figure 1. Map of Cities and Other Places in and around Los Angeles (Allen and Turner 1997).

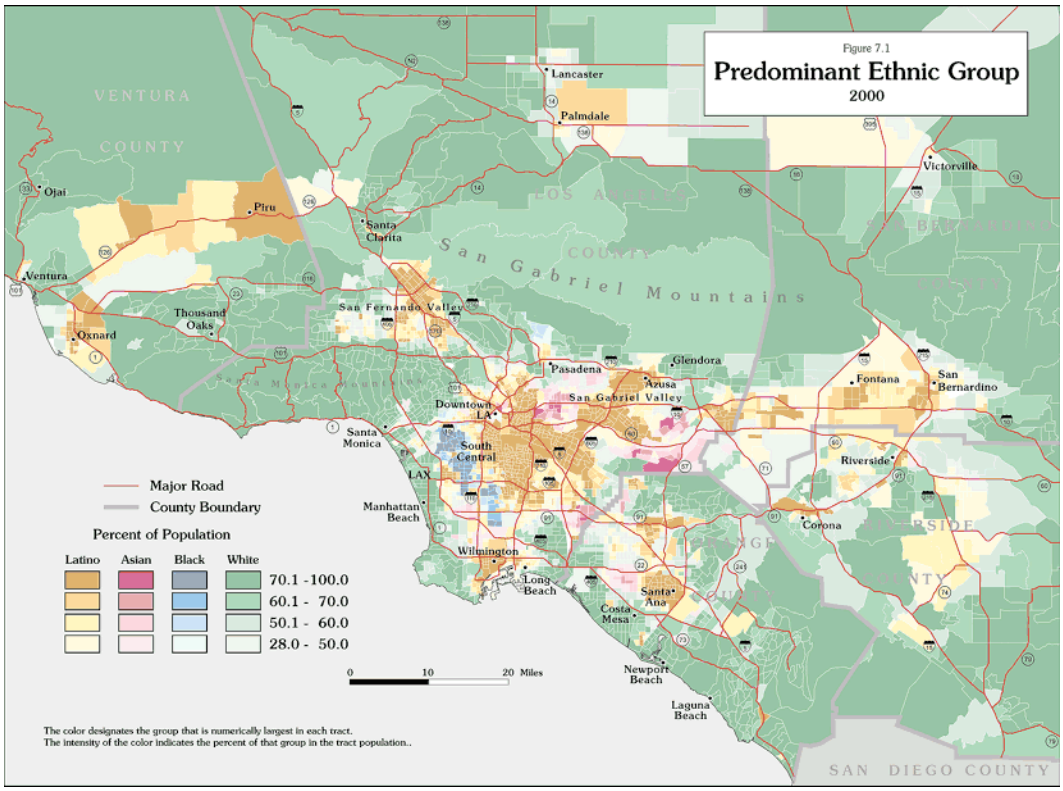

Figure 2. Map of Predominant Ethnic Groups in Los Angeles (Allen and Turner 2000).

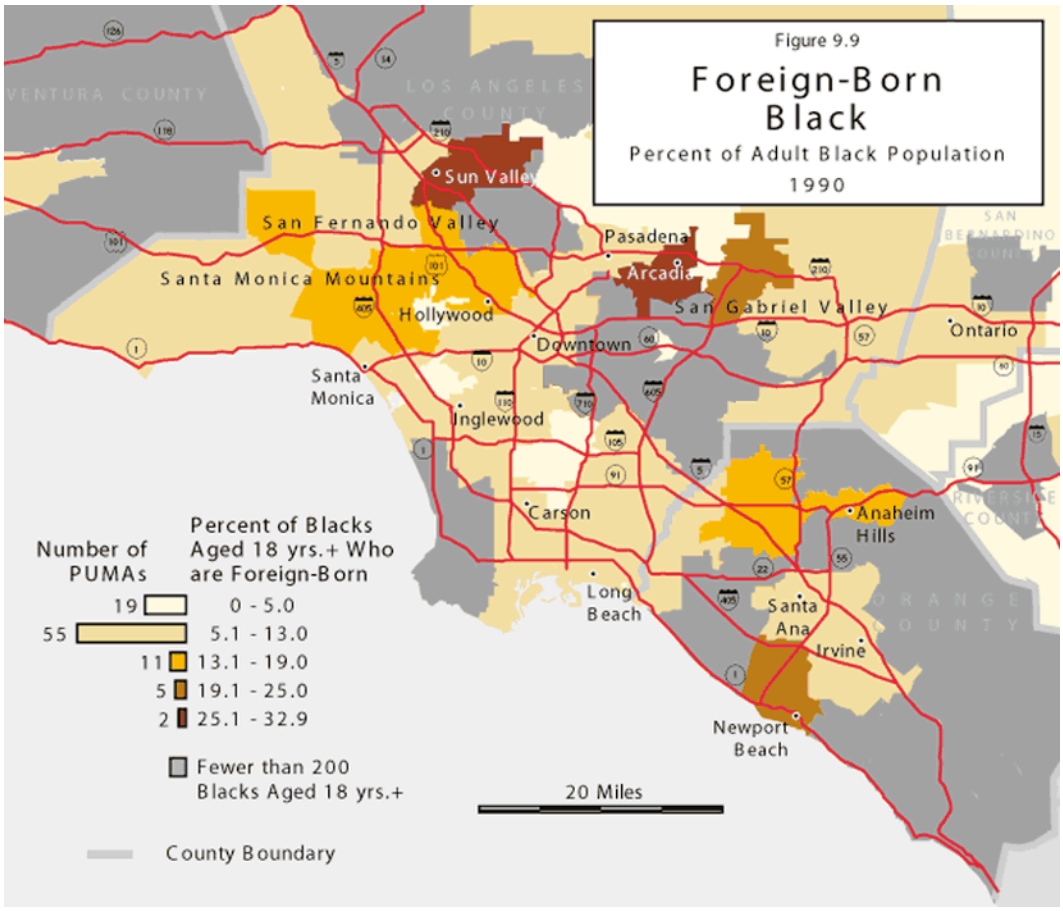

Figure 3. Map of Foreign-born Black Residents in Los Angeles (Allen and Turner 2000).

Figure 4, 5 (L to R). The Ghanaian-owned Ngoma Restaurant on Wilshire Blvd. sits between an African hair salon and the Conga Room, which often features African diasporic popular music. Figure 6. African Produce Central Market, a Ghanaian grocery store on Washington Blvd. (photos by Sherri Canon)

Chapter Three

African Associations: Channeling Ethnic and National Identity

"If the antelope will not go to the durbar, his skin has to go," Akan proverb.

Background of African Voluntary Associations

African associations, or "voluntary associations," are mutual aid organizations that benefit their members financially, culturally, socially, and politically. In every major U.S. city with an African immigrant presence, there are a number of African associations structured along a common identification such as national, ethnic, or pan-African identity. For example, national associations such as the Ghana Association of Southern California and the Senegalese Association of Southern California accept members from all ethnic groups belonging to those countries. Ethnic associations such as the Asante Cultural Society, the Ewe Habøbø, and the Okwawuman Association benefit members who identify with those ethno-linguistic groups, which are all from Ghana. Other associations revolve around occupation, gender, or religion and assist groups that might otherwise be neglected or marginalized such as the Senegalese Women's Association or the Ghana Muslim Association. Associations are key facilitators for helping immigrants adjust to the cultural shock of the

foreign setting. They help new arrivals secure housing and employment in the new city and also keep them abreast of political and social events back home.

Through associations, immigrants maintain both imagined and real links to their homeland. They do so by collecting funds towards members' family ceremonies such as naming ceremonies, weddings, and especially funerals. And they do so on a larger scale by funding development projects (such as hospitals and schools) for hometowns and regions. Associations also instill an ongoing cultural identity by organizing and producing social events for African immigrant communities such as ethnic festivals, national celebrations, religious holiday parties, and family ceremonies including baby naming ceremonies, weddings, and funerals. As Attah-Poku has expressed, "People enjoy inherent and unstoppable satisfaction from the practice of aspects of their original culture" (Attah-Poku 1996:4). Through their participation in ethnic and national associations, immigrants reproduce cultural institutions, replicate kinship-based structures, and form social, economic and political bonds among like-identified people. African associations in the Diaspora channel national and ethnic identity among their members which allow them to avoid assimilating into the dominant culture (Arthur 2000) and express identities that are distinct from African Americans.

The practice of forming associations did not originate with immigrants in the Diaspora, but began as a strategy of social and cultural adjustment among Africans who migrated from rural areas to African cities during the colonial era. West Africans have migrated from rural farmlands to urban African centers periodically since the colonial era as a direct result of economic changes and pressures, resulting in a swift urbanization of sub-

Saharan Africa. Migrants established ethnic associations in urban African centers as a strategy to "foster friendship and cooperation among members, to give financial help to members in need, to unceasingly link members or migrants to their ancestral cultures, and to mobilize members to actively participate in ongoing development projects at home" (Attah-Poku 1996:46-47). The main aims of ethnic associations in Africa today are economic, socio-cultural, and minimally political. The most important domains for membership involve the payment of regular dues and additional contributions towards funeral expenses along with participation in cultural and musical activities. As Daniel Avorgbedor explains regarding the Anlo-Ewe Habøbø, "Participation in musical performance is a special area of attention, both according to the constitution and as interpreted in daily life, and members who cease to participate regularly in the music stand to forfeit their privileges and entitlements. One of the main requirements for joining an association is the demonstration of knowledge and skills in Anlo culture and music, through dancing before an executive committee" (Avorgbedor 2000:392).

In American cities, the need for African immigrants to negotiate through cultural and institutional blockades becomes multiplied, particularly for Francophone immigrants who must also overcome the language barrier. Immigrants are confronted with institutionalized and local forms of racism in addition to a growing distrust and alienation of non-Americans during the current "war on terror." "In this environment the culture shock and the societal disorientation that confront immigrants, particularly new arrivals, are so high that participation in immigrant ethnic associations is one of the best strategies that an immigrant can use to survive or systematically integrate into the new territory" (Attah-Poku 1996:57).

Associations that revolve around national identity, such as the Ghana Association, often serve as umbrella organizations over a host of smaller ethnic associations. While the ethnic associations have smaller memberships and concentrate on promoting ethnic culture and identity, the national associations allow African immigrants to build larger coalitions of members to develop economic, social, and political projects which benefit the needs of their members in the Diaspora and their families and communities in their country of origin. Moving outward from the national level are pan-African organizations that accept members from any African country and typically stipulate in their by-laws that the executive officers represent different African nations.

As many immigrants belong to more than one association such as an ethnic, national, pan-African, or religious association, a balance must be struck between the time, attention, and dues a member gives to each association. This conflict reflects a constant shifting between different levels of identity that immigrants negotiate. Kobla Agbanyo, Vice President of the Ghana Association and Past President of the Ewe Habøbø expressed to me, "I am Ewe first, Ghanaian second, and African third" (9 August 2004, personal communication). This type of multi-level and situational identification is common among Ghanaians. Nana Osei-Tutu, President of the Ghana Association of Southern California, formerly held the position of the first chief of the Asante Cultural Society in Los Angeles, a position through which he promoted Asante culture within the Asante community and to the public at large. Currently, as president of the national organization for Ghanaians, Osie-Tutu is expected to promote a national cultural identity and produce more nationalist projects for Ghana. He told me that, while promoting Asante culture has been an important pre-

occupation, his current position requires him to be more inclusive of Ghana's ethnic groups who are living in Los Angeles. "I represent all Ghanaians here as president. If you align more to an ethnic group, you can't be an effective president. You need the support of all groups." (15 September 2002, personal communication). Senegalese immigrants have avoided any struggles between ethnic and national allegiance by foregoing ethnic associations altogether in Los Angeles. Omar Sall, President of the Senegal Association of Southern California, expresses that having ethnic associations would make it difficult for Senegalese immigrants to pool their resources and unify as a group. He expressed a disdain towards promoting ethnic identities or cultural projects among the Senegalese in Los Angeles, with the opinion that such projects would cause divisiveness. "We want to stay national" (9 August 2004, personal communication).

Another organization that operates like an ethnic association is the *da'ira*, a prayer circle, educational institution, and mutual aid organization for Mouride immigrants. The da'ira has fundamentally helped Mouride immigrants from Senegal adjust to urban American life, while at the same time, has allowed them to resist assimilation into African American or white American culture. The first da'ira was created in urban Senegal at the end of World War II by Cheikh Mbacke, a grandson of Cheikh Amadou Bamba. It "was first conceived as a sort of prayer circle where disciples from the same town or neighborhood would meet on a weekly basis to read the Qur'an, chant Amadou Bamba's religious poems and socialize. Adherents of a *dahira* were required to pay weekly, monthly or annual subscriptions used in part for mutual assistance and in part to contribute to the expenses of the brotherhood as a whole through its paramount leader or caliph" (Babou 2002:154). Here was an opportunity

for Mouride immigrants, who were mostly Wolof rural farmers who had moved to the city to become traders, to adapt to the socio-cultural changes and to intensify their Mouride cultural, social, and religious practice together. The da'ira also acted as a political organization, lobbying for the interests of its members. Gradually, new da'iras were organized along the lines of gender, occupation, geography, or different branches of Mouridism.

During the latter half of the twentieth century, the Mouridiyya experienced an increasing urbanization, with Mourides migrating first to Senegalese and other African cities, and then to Europe and the United States in the early 1980s. The expansion of the Mouride brotherhood to wider parts of the world has paralleled an increasing cohesion and solidarity within Mouride migrant communities. Mourides' marginal characterization by the general public in some degree contributed to the da'ira's aim at strengthening the brotherhoods. Babou argues that certain characteristics internal to the brotherhood account for this increasing solidarity, namely the discipline established by Cheikh Amadou Bamba based on *tarbiyya*, a combination of instruction, manual work, and prayers. Through the da'iras, Mouride communities have thrived and succeeded economically in urban settings such as New York City (Babou 2002). Buggenhagen also suggests that Mourides who moved from farms to urban areas and outward in the global trade network have maintained their work ethic and sense of deference to the *cheikh* by substituting hard work in the fields as remittances to the cheikh for hard work selling luxury items such as hats, sunglasses, and watches, transforming their sweat for cash remittances and thus, continuing to secure their baraka (blessings, or salvation) (Buggenhagen 2003). Recently, an umbrella da'ira has been created to oversee and administrate all the da'ira branches around the world. This

organization mediates between the American branches and Senegal, and sends financial contributions from its membership to the caliph every three months. Also, international da'iras in New York and Los Angeles raise money for the restoration and maintenance of Touba, the holy city that contains the mosque of Amadou Bamba. Each month, at the Los Angeles da'ira, a collection is taken which is sent to Touba during the annual *magal* in April, the Mouride pilgrimage to the holy city. Additionally, every Wednesday a representative of the da'ira goes around to the Mouride vendors in downtown Los Angeles collecting donations (*adya*) to send to Touba.

This chapter will introduce the associations to which Ghanaian and Senegalese immigrants belong in Southern California. In the first section, I will detail the background, structure, and aims of the pan-African, national, and ethnic associations in the Los Angeles area. In the second section, I will describe several national and ethnic events sponsored by the associations including the Senegalese and Ghanaian national independence celebrations, a Ga Homøwø festival, and special visits by dignitaries from Ghana. African immigrants regard music and dance as fundamental agents of identity formation. Music and dance at association events are enmeshed with people's attitudes about their place in the world, cultural history, and sense of belonging, both spiritually and physically. Therefore, I pay particular attention to the musical choices made by the participants and the underlying strategies for asserting different aspects of cultural identity.

An additional role of the association in the Diaspora is to replicate a traditional kinship-based social structure by organizing, promoting, and contributing money to family ceremonies, particularly baby naming ceremonies, traditional weddings, and funerals. In the

chapters that follow, I will present a detailed ethnography of immigrant family ceremonies and interpret how Senegalese and Ghanaian immigrants in Los Angeles negotiate and reconfigure their identities by reproducing ritual events which center on family relationships and community reciprocity, while simultaneously adapting their rituals to the social and cultural constraints of the foreign setting.

Structure and Aims of African Associations in Los Angeles

In Southern California, the United African Federation is the primary pan-African association, which accepts immigrants from all African countries. Its aims are political, socio-cultural, and economic. In a letter to African immigrant community leaders, the association president outlines the structure and aims of the UAF. The language leans strongly towards advocacy and coalition building for individuals of African birth and national organizations of Africans in the United States. He states, "All would agree that a strong and united African refugee and immigrant community in the United States that speaks with one voice is in the interest of every African…We are constantly reminded (rightly) and treated (wrongly) as Africans. We have therefore come together to act as one in order to make any impact on American domestic and foreign policies" (Walusimbi 2003). The official objectives of the UAF are:

> 1. To provide a forum for the advancement of the interests of the African immigrant community in the United States in the areas of immigration, resettlement, education and training, career development, health, youth development and family unification.

2. To create awareness about the distinct needs of African immigrants and refugees in the United States.
3. To promote African culture and heritage.
4. To advance the cause and interests of the African continent on the world stage.
5. To assist in the promotion of democracy and accountability in Africa.
6. To promote and foster social, unity, cultural, and economic development.

I attended a meeting of the officers of the United African Federation on 5 October 2002 in Gardena, a town south of Los Angeles. The agenda for the meeting included discussion on 1) the federation's past successes and plans for participation in upcoming events including the African Marketplace and Cultural Faire, an annual summer music festival celebrating African heritage, and the Black Business Expo; 2) an announcement and briefing of an upcoming trip to Africa by the federation president Abbey Walusimbi and vice president Wale Jimoh; 3) the African Times newspaper's annual award ceremony to be held in Beverly Hills on October 25, 2002; 4) the Round Table/Town Hall Meeting organized by U.S. Congresswoman Diane Watson and Constituency for Africa/L.A. to be held on October 26, 2002; and 5) the International Trade and Fair conference scheduled for February 2003. While most of the agenda items were innocuous, the second item, the announcement of the association president and vice president's upcoming trip to Africa caused some very heated debate and ended with strong words and a threat of resignation. It seems that some felt that since the aims of their trip were unrelated to the UAF and since it had not been decided and agreed upon by the other officers, the officers should not be representing the federation in this particular business endeavor. Most of the other discussion during the meeting involved

political and cultural issues concerning upcoming events that would facilitate more awareness and more opportunity for the African immigrant community.

The national associations accept members from a particular African country regardless of ethnicity, gender, or religion. They promote national identity through organizing cultural events such as National Independence Day, visits by African dignitaries such as presidents, chiefs, and ambassadors, and projects that benefit their home countries. They help promote musical and cultural practices related to the African family by organizing, producing, and contributing funds to family ceremonies such as naming ceremonies, weddings, and funerals. Funerals elicit the highest turnout of members and the greatest financial support of the association. When an association member dies in the United States, the association organizes the funeral, arranges the transport of the corpse to Africa, and donates a sum in the neighborhood of $1,000 to the family. For a family member of an association member, the association gives a smaller sum such as $150 as a consolation. Each member donates $25 or more at the funeral for the costs of the funeral and for moving the corpse, and average donations reach $20,000. Many African immigrants also belong to burial societies, which are associations that have pooled their resources into bank accounts or insurance policies to help offset funeral expenses, particularly the costs associated with sending a body for burial. The importance of burying the deceased in Africa cannot be underestimated. For Ghanaians, this practice is rooted in the belief that one must be buried in one's ancestral home in order to reunite with their ancestors and become an ancestor oneself, to oversee and influence the lives of the living.

If a Ghanaian immigrant loses a relative in Ghana, the surviving family members in Los Angeles hold a symbolic wake keeping and funeral for the deceased where they pray, sing, dance, and collect contributions from the association and community members. These funerals are performed "as if" the deceased were present. The immigrants do their best to recreate the traditional musical and cultural practices of a typical Ghanaian wake keeping, funeral, and reception while also adapting to the limitations of the host environment. At an Asante funeral, the bereaved sit in state, wearing black and red clothing called *kutunkuni*, *kobin*, and *brissi*. The elder of the family pours a libation to the spirits of the ancestors and wishes the deceased a safe journey to the afterworld. Music and dance are central to the duration of the event. At Akan immigrant funerals, if there is a traditional drumming group in the community skilled in funerary music, they will be invited to sing *adowa* songs accompanied by the adowa ensemble of drums, bells, and rattles. Otherwise, a DJ will be hired to play adowa and *nnwonkoro* recordings. After the traditional music, a DJ plays highlife for guests to dance until dawn. At Christian funeral ceremonies, Ghanaians merge traditional and Christian performance practices in unique ways, which will become more apparent in chapter six on immigrant funeral ceremonies. Apart from organizing the funeral itself, association members also spend time consoling the bereaved by visiting, drinking, singing, and advising.

Senegalese immigrants, on the other hand, do not hold funerals for family members who have passed away in Africa. In Senegal, in accordance with Muslim practice, the deceased is buried as quickly as possible, preferably the same day or following day, and the body is not held for viewing. As a result, Senegalese immigrants often miss the funerals of

loved ones if they cannot get back to Senegal in time. Immediately following a funeral guests gather at the home of the family to console the bereaved. Two days later, there is another gathering at which people give a funeral donation called *sarakh* to help cover the funeral expenses. Seven days after the funeral, there is another gathering at which people give a sarakh in honor of the seventh anniversary of the person's death. At all these events, there is a somber mood with no music or celebration. In the event that a Senegalese immigrant loses a loved one in Africa, there is a similar attempt by association members and officers to visit the bereaved and offer sarakh in Los Angeles. If a Senegalese dies in America, the Senegal Association plays a key role in amassing the funds necessary to send a body back to Senegal for burial. A funeral may be held in Los Angeles and after the funeral, association officers and members gather at the home with the bereaved to give sarakh and spend time consoling them. Again, there is no music or celebration at any funerary rites among Senegalese, given the Muslim context. This concept differs immensely from Ghanaians, whose funeral rites are embedded with music and dance performance at every stage.

National associations are typically structured as non-profit charitable organizations. Their executive officers are patterned after a western organization with president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer, while the ethnic associations often follow a traditional cum western style executive order with traditional names for chief or king, assistant chief, linguist, etc. The Ghana Association of Southern California has three levels of membership: regular members, persons who are Ghanaian by birth, naturalization, parentage, or marriage; associate members, individuals who support significant contribution towards the purposes of the association; and lifetime members, those who pay fifteen years dues, which are $30 per

year, in advance. The Ghana Association began as the Ghana Students Association in 1955. Between the years of 1950 and 1975, most of the Ghanaians who came to the U.S., and particularly to California, were students who came on scholarships or were sponsored by their parents to continue their education. The name change occurred in 1980 when some of the graduates decided to stay in California and work, while other Ghanaians continued to migrate. The Ghana Association currently has about 300 members. The mission and aims of the association are to support the immediate needs of its members, sponsor educational and cultural activities such as Ghana Independence Day on March 6, and pool its resources for the support of the homeland. The officers work closely with the Ghanaian government and other institutions, acting as a liaison between Ghana and Ghanaian immigrants in Southern California. They direct investments from the U.S. to Ghana, send medical supplies to Ghanaian hospitals, and send educational supplies to schools. Locally, the officers work with the city government of Los Angeles to assist the immigrant community, serve on neighborhood watch groups, clean up graffiti, and encourage people to vote during elections.

The Senegal Association of Southern California was formed in 1987 and currently has about 50 active members. The missions and aims of the association are to provide financial assistance to its members, to organize, promote, and contribute to family ceremonies, host national events such as Senegal Independence Day on April 4, and organize cultural events such as parties that showcase Senegalese music, dance, food, and costumes. The Senegal Association members meet once a month to discuss business and upcoming events. At this time, they collect monthly donations, which are determined on a sliding scale from $10 to $20 per month. The executive branch includes a president, vice president,

treasurer, secretary of organization, and seven board members. Symbolized by the baobab tree, the Senegal Association is the main organization for Senegalese immigrants, as there are no ethnic associations. There is however, a Senegalese Women's Association, which attends to concerns specific to Senegalese women, many of whom are the wives of Mouride traders. As in Senegal, the women's association in Southern California holds regular meetings and hosts *sabar* parties to raise money for the support of its membership. The da'ira, a prayer circle, fellowship, and mutual aid organization for Mouride immigrants, meets the second Sunday of each month at a different member's house in Los Angeles. Here, Mourides pray, read the Qur'an, sing *qasa'id*, the oral poetry of Cheikh Amadou Bamba set to repetitive song forms, and discuss business. At each monthly meeting, a collection is taken which is sent to the holy city of Touba.

Ghanaian ethnic associations are organized under the umbrella of the Ghana Association of Southern California and serve individuals who identify with different socio-linguistic groups. Active ethnic associations in Southern California include the Asante Cultural Society, Ewe Habøbø, Ga-Adangbe Association, Okwawuman (Kwawu) Association, Awutu Effutu (Fante) Association, and the Northern Alliance. Ethnic associations are more focused on promoting the traditional music, culture, and customs of particular ethnic groups than the national association. In his study of Ghanaian immigrant associations in New York, Attah-Poku suggests that experiencing ethnic cultural costumes, music, dances, and traditions boosts immigrants' morale, solidifies their identity, and elevates their spirits, "which in turn helps them to fully operate and participate in the bustling world of New York" (Attah-Poku 1996:87). The ethnic associations in Los Angeles are no different.

The story of the Asante association's formation in Los Angeles reverberates the cultural identity anxiety that African immigrants sometimes experience while attempting to adapt to American culture and society. In May of 1985, the mother of an Ashanti immigrant who had come to visit her daughter in Los Angeles passed away. During her funeral, an Ashanti man who was also visiting his son expressed deep dismay at the lack of attention to Asante ritual norms. He asked one of the attendants, Yaw Konadu, "What kind of funeral ceremony is this? Have you forgotten your culture? You Ghanaians here have shown a disgrace for your culture" (Boateng 1992:8). Konadu subsequently gathered six other Ashantis and formed the Asante Cultural Society, naming Nana Osei-Tutu (née Felix Appiah) as chairman. Two years later in 1987, the leadership was restructured to reflect the royal court of the Asante kingdom, with Nana Osei-Tutu sworn in as King (Asantefuohene) over the Ashanti in Southern California. Today, there is an extensive group of officers in the Asante Cultural Society, including Queen Mother, Linguist, Publicity Secretary, Organizing Secretary (Krontihene), Treasurer, Vice Chairman (Akwamuhene), elders, advisers, and others. The enstoolment (inauguration), at which the new king swore allegiance to the King of Ghana (Asantehene), was documented by Zena Pearlstone in *Ethnic L.A.*, a book which explores the diversity of Los Angeles' immigrant populations.

> Nana Osei-Tutu Appiah was chosen by the local Asante elders and crowned in a traditional ceremony involving the installation of the Tribal Elders for the State of California and the unveiling of the "Golden Stool" of the Asante people. The Culver City auditorium was transformed by hundreds of dazzling Ghanaian robes, substantial gold jewelry and emblems of office, and large umbrellas covering those of high rank.

> The Asante came from all over the country - from New York, Miami, and Chicago - and from the home country came the son of the Kumase Asantehene. The money for the elaborate ceremony was raised from monthly dues, tickets sold at the door and a grant from the Cultural Affairs Department of the City of Los Angeles. The festivities began in the early evening and continued in to the small hours of the morning, as music and dancing followed the installation. (Pearlstone 1990:118).

The Asante Cultural Society's formation into a kingship was partly inspired by the Ashanti on the east coast through the support of the Asanteman Association of New York, which formed in 1982. Attah-Poku describes the enstoolment of a new king of the Ashanti in New York.

> The Asantefuohene of 1993, for example, pledged the oath to Nana Osei Kuffuor Feyiasehene, who deputised for Asantehene. [At the installation of the new chief] libation is poured, the linguists orate, the Queen introduces the new King, and the King-elect holding a state sword and wearing his mantle upon his chest, is sworn in. He promises the whole Asanteman Association (which is here considered the Asante Kingdom in New York) that he will never turn his back on them whenever called upon...The new Asantefuohene is then carried on the members' shoulders, and then in a palanquin amidst drumming and dancing to traditional tunes by the Asanteman cultural group (Attah-Poku 1996:77-78).

The purpose of the Asante Cultural Society of Southern California, according to the organization's literature, is "to share our culture, promote and educate the general public, especially the children (who are our future) on this dignified and spectacular culture of the Asantes through drumming, dancing, arts and craft" (Boateng 1992:8). Fortunately for the

association, a celebrated chief drummer for the Asante royal family, Agya Akwasi Badu, had been recruited by Mantle Hood and Kwabena Nketia to teach African drumming at UCLA's Ethnomusicology department in 1969 and was invited to serve as the chief drummer for the Asante Cultural Society. Agya Badu represented the association by performing on *atumpan*, the set of two Asante royal talking drums, at both private and public cultural events.

The Anlo-Ewe Habøbø (literally, "Association") was established in 1980 under the motto "Milenovisi" meaning, "Let's continue our friendship and kinship" and currently serves twenty-five to thirty members in Southern California. The executive branch of the Habøbø includes a president, secretary, assistant secretary, and treasurer. With dues set at $60 per year, the association focuses most of its efforts on maintaining cultural practices related to the family by pooling its resources during members' outdoorings (naming ceremonies), weddings, and especially funerals. The Ewe Habøbø, like many other ethnic associations, has expanded its scope by affiliating with a nationally based organization that connects local associations of the same ethnicity spanning the United States and Canada, which also has a large population of African immigrants. The association ultimately aspires to develop a global affiliation patterned after other international-based ethnic associations, such as the umbrella organization for the Igbo Diaspora, the World Igbo Congress (WIC). In 1995, the Ewe Habøbø of Southern California joined CEANA, the Council of Ewe Associations of North America, which holds an annual convention in a different U.S. city every Labor Day weekend. In 2000, the Los Angeles based Habøbø hosted the CEANA convention. Approximately 200 Ewe-speaking immigrants from around the U.S. and Canada attended the weekend-long series of events, which included executive meetings, a general meeting, and a

banquet featuring an Ewe feast, live drummers performing borborbor and agbadza, the two most popular styles of Ewe traditional music, followed by hours of dancing to recorded highlife music. The final event was a family style picnic on Sunday afternoon, at which guests engaged in impromptu drumming and singing of Ewe traditional music, and danced to CDs and tapes of highlife. The practice of building coalitions under an ethnic identification reinforces the conception of an ethnic Diaspora that is mapped across the U.S. or North America and allows African immigrants to hold fast to an ethnic level of cultural identity and resist assimilating into black American culture or into the dominant society.

The Ga-Adangbe Association formed in 1992 with ten members and has since grown to 150 members in Southern California who contribute $120 per year to the organization. The local association is affiliated with the Gadangbe Association of North America, which holds an annual meeting in a different U.S. or Canadian city, consisting of meetings and cultural, musical festivities much like the Ewe CEANA. The motto for the Gadangbe Association of North America is "Ga see gbe dzi gbe," meaning "Our roots is what we have to fall back on." Similarly to the Ashanti Cultural Society, the Ga-Adangbe Association of Southern California was formed as a reaction to an improperly performed funeral of a Ghanaian immigrant. According to Sam Sai, the treasurer and one of the founders of the association, a Ghanaian man passed away in Chicago some years ago, and since he was not connected with any other Ghanaians in the city, the City of Chicago ended up burying him there. Because of the extraordinary cultural importance of being buried in the homeland, this event was seen as a tragedy by Ga who heard the news. To avoid this kind of thing from occurring in their own community, the Ga in Los Angeles County formed an association with the primary aims of

financially assisting Ga and Adangbe immigrants with family ceremonies and bringing members together for cultural events which include Ga music, dance, food, language, and traditional forms of spirituality such as pouring libations. "Everything we do is centered around music and dancing," explains Sai. At family picnics, outdoorings (naming ceremonies), funerals, and other association-sponsored events, people engage in dancing to both traditional drumming and popular highlife music. I asked him if there are enough qualified musicians in L.A. to perform traditional music at ceremonies. He replied, "A handful. I must admit, however, the old traditional music is somewhat dying. Unfortunately, the western influence is too strong" (16 August 2004, personal communication).

The Ghana Muslim Association was recently formed in 2001 under the moniker Yanzongo, a Hausa term meaning "An association of people living together in a community." It currently serves thirty-five Ghanaian Muslims living in Southern California, mostly in downtown L.A., Inglewood, and outlying cities such as Hawthorne and Pomona. The officers include president, vice president/treasurer, and secretary. The aim of the association is not Islamic *per se*, but to financially and culturally assist Ghanaian immigrants who are Muslim. A large facet of the association involves assisting members during family ceremonies such as weddings and naming ceremonies by offering the family money, gifts, and their support by attending the ritual events. According to their vice president/treasurer, Zubair Yousif, this new association aspires to reach the level of the Sierra Leone Muslim Association, which has been active for twelve years and hosts a large annual celebration for their community.

Cultural Events which Channel Ethnic and National Identity

In addition to supporting members financially, the national and ethnic African immigrant associations strive to promote cultural identity among their members by organizing, hosting, and contributing money to occasions related to the nation, ethnic group, and family. In addition, associations contribute to events in the public sphere that promote African music and cultural heritage such as the annual African Marketplace and Cultural Faire, a three-weekend long music, culture, and arts festival every summer in Los Angeles. But the occasions that are privately produced for the immigrant community constitute the main scope of the associations' revenue and time. These occasions can be categorized under the headings of administrative, cultural, political, religious, economic, and familial.

Administrative events include general, executive, and special meetings at which the assembly discusses reports, financial issues, and upcoming events. Associations hold regular meetings once a month or once a quarter. Some associations collect monthly dues at these meetings. Most meetings are tempered with a degree of religiosity, in that they may begin and end with a prayer or singing of religious songs, reflecting the close connection between religion and everyday life in African cultural practice.

Cultural events include national or ethnic celebrations, festivals, and parties. The national associations concentrate on events which reinforce a national identity, the most popular and heavily attended being the celebration of their nations' own independence day, which includes special meetings, religious services, and cultural celebrations heavily geared towards music, dance, food, and costumes. The ethnic associations, on the other hand, produce parties and festivals that showcase a regional or ethnic identity, such as the Ga

homowo and the Asante *akwasidae*. The ethnic associations situate their events along the calendar year to avoid overlapping with other groups, which allows members of other ethnic groups to attend, except on unavoidably popular holiday weekends such as Labor Day when several ethnic association hold their events. Music and dance are at the center of these cultural events. The musical choices at the celebrations and festivals are direct reflections of the negotiations between various levels of identity by Ghanaian and Senegalese immigrants. The ethnographic descriptions, below, of Ghanaian and Senegalese Independence Day Celebrations, a Ghanaian king's visit to Los Angeles, and a Ga homowo festival will reveal how immigrants' choices of music and dance at cultural events allow participants to create boundaries of inclusion and position themselves according to class, religion, ethnicity, nationality, and gender. The phenomenon whereby music and dance act as agents for positionality, enmeshing identity, place, and cultural expectations, provides the strongest evidence as to how African immigrants isolate themselves according to national and ethnic groupings and avoid assimilating into African American culture or American culture at large. As Sam Sai, Treasurer of the Ga Association expressed, "We Ghanaians tend to keep to ourselves, just as the Ivorians, Nigerians, and Senegalese" (16 August 2004, personal communication).

Political events sponsored by the associations include town hall meetings and special visits by African dignitaries. Visitors fall into two distinct categories – persons of traditional authority such as kings or chiefs and persons of national office including a nation's president, minister, or ambassador. Visits by traditional leaders such as chiefs and kings help instill a cultural identity for immigrants and link them to a specific region in the homeland. Visits by

key national leaders reinforce the immigrants' ties to the nation and highlight their status as primary financial contributors to their nations' economies through regular remittances to their families and home regions. During visits by national and traditional dignitaries, African immigrants strategically position themselves at a nexus between traditional forms of cultural identity and modern Diasporic elitism. To illustrate, the Ghana Association recently hosted a visit by Ghanaian President John Kufuor to the Ghanaian community in Los Angeles. The event takes place in the ballroom of The Los Angeles Airport Hilton Hotel. The president's visit coincides with Ghana's women's soccer team, the Black Queens, competing in a series of bouts in Southern California for the World Cup. The Black Queens file into the Hilton from the long black tour bus, noticeably depressed after their loss to Russia earlier that day. Still in their uniforms, the team members are welcomed by a line of cheering onlookers as they advance into the hotel lobby. They join a few hundred Ghanaian men, women, and children who are waiting inside the ballroom amidst floor-to-ceiling mirrored columns, crystal chandeliers, and gold and black patterned carpeting. A high table is situated at the front of the large room, with a Ghanaian flag on the wall. Officers of the Ghana Association buzz around in the hallway comparing notes and taking cell phone calls. Meanwhile, guests continue to wait upwards of two and a half hours for the dignitaries to arrive. Suddenly, Adjei Abankwah, a Ghanaian drummer visiting from Colorado, strikes up an impromptu session of traditional Ga drumming on a djembe, which was brought by another man. Quickly, four other guests join in, forming a circle with the drummer at one end and they sing, clap, and dance to the well-known *kpanlogo* songs. One woman and three men including Francis Appiah, the son of the president of the Ghana Association, and Nana Offuri, the Linguist for

the Asante Cultural Society clap their hands and sing with gusto and take turns going to the center of their small circle to dance solo, while the guests in the ballroom watch and smile. Their improvised performance relieves the tension of the long wait for the president and his cabinet. Their performance also reconfigures the boundaries of the event by imprinting the moment and space with the sounds and movements of a traditional activity which would normally be performed outdoors at any given family ritual event or festival in Ghana. Their performance creates a time out of time moment directly at the nexus of Ghana and Los Angeles, one of those moments that defines a continually negotiated identity formation that blends traditional cultural identity with western elite sociality.

Religious celebrations sponsored by associations occur throughout the calendar year. National and ethnic associations by and large sponsor religious occasions that represent the majority of their membership. The Ghana Association sponsors Christian oriented events such as the Easter dance, a Christmas party, Evangelical Christian seminars, and other church related activities, while the Senegalese Association sponsors Muslim related events including the Prophet's Birthday, the End of Ramadan, the annual Magal (Mouride pilgrimage to Touba), Tabaski (Feast of the Sacrifice), and special visits by cheikhs and imams. The Christian events sponsored by the Ghana Association have a significant musical component and are typically structured as social dance parties, taking place either in a nightclub or reception hall. Ghanaian families, couples, and groups of friends arrive late and stay late and dance to a DJ's choice of old and new highlife music. For special events that take place in the church, music also structures and frames the activities, especially in the African Pentecostal churches. The Senegalese religious celebrations, in strict contrast to the Ghanaian dance

parties and church events, are devoid of music and tempered by a mood of stillness and reverence, due to Islam's ambivalence towards music and dance in a religious setting. The main activities at these celebrations include listening to tapes of Qur'anic recitation, either by African or Arab reciters, reading verses from the Qur'an, praying collectively and individually, and collecting money for the association and the religious brotherhood. Mouride celebrants also sing qasa'id on occasion.

Economic events organized by associations include fundraisers and business expos. Associations often throw non-specific parties to fundraise on behalf of the association or in support of special projects. Like the cultural events, these parties center on music, dance, food, and traditional attire and feature a DJ playing popular music from the association members' home area and occasionally traditional drummers and dancers. Examples of fundraising parties include the Ghana End of Year Party, the Senegal Association parties, and the Senegal Women's Association parties.

Family occasions include lifecycle ceremonies such as baby naming ceremonies, weddings, and funeral ceremonies, in addition to other family events including family picnics, anniversaries, birthdays, and graduation. As I have noted, a primary objective of the associations in the Diaspora is to replicate a traditional kinship-based social structure by organizing, hosting, and attending family ceremonies. The national and ethnic associations not only promote family ceremonies, but they divide up the responsibilities for producing the events. For example, according to a member of the Senegalese Association, "The president can say, 'I'm gonna cook the chicken at home and bring it to the party.' Another person says, 'I'm gonna take care of the place for the ceremony.' Other one says, 'I'm gonna go buy the

boissons (drinks).' For the morning naming ceremony, they have one who says, 'I'm gonna cook the 'lah' (corn cereal, or porridge)" (15 July 2003, personal communication).

In the following section I present an ethnographic account of several different types of association events for Senegalese and Ghanaian immigrants in the Los Angeles area. These events are key sites in which African immigrants make musical performance choices that allow them to negotiate through various levels of cultural identity including ethnic, national, and religious identification. By adapting their rituals to the constraints of the host environment, yet transforming the landscape and soundscape of the foreign surroundings to meet their cultural expectations, African immigrants assert their cultural identity and avoid assimilating.

Senegal Independence Day Celebration

Considering the relatively small number of Senegalese immigrants in Southern California, a fairly large number get together every year to celebrate their independence from France's colonial government of 4 April 1960. In 2003, The Senegalese Association hosts the Senegal Independence Day Celebration on April 5 at Bistro 4040, a Senegalese restaurant in the Crenshaw District. Chef and owner Alle Thiam, in preparation for an international crowd, has prepared a mixed menu of Senegalese food and American soul food including lamb dibi, chicken dibi, collard greens, mixed vegetables, cornbread, salad, sweet potatoes, and red beans. The long, narrow restaurant has been transformed to allow for optimum dancing space, with the tables removed, the chairs pushed against the walls, the DJ station placed in the back corner of the room, and the buffet set up against the side

wall next to the kitchen. The restaurant is dressed with its usual festive decorations of tropical plants, African travel posters, small sculptures, Senegalese flags, and kente cloth.

The order and structure of events at the party are heavily influenced by the musical selections of the DJ. The entire event takes on a certain arc, through which the music shapes the physical space and sentiments of the guests. While the banquet and dance party get underway at 10:00 p.m., the Senegalese do not arrive until midnight or 1:00 a.m., in "African time," and then dance until 4:00 a.m. Early in the evening, it appears that Thiam's prediction was correct, as there is a mixed crowd of African Americans, Caucasians, Latin Americans, other West Africans, and a few Senegalese, most of whom are dressed in African style dress and some in western business casual attire. As guests dine and chat with one another, DJ Clement plays a variety of West African genres including salsa, rhumba, soukous, and soca to appeal to the diverse crowd. A few people take to the dance floor, while most of the guests remain in their seats with their plates in their laps, finishing their meals and chatting intermittently. The music is loud and fills the small space and precludes a lot of conversing. Chef Alle Thiam is a magnificent host, periodically emerging from the kitchen and making his rounds through the room welcoming newcomers. He greets each person who comes in with hugs, sets them up with a plate and a chair, and wishes them a good time. His warm gestures display an essential Wolof cultural trait of *terranga* (hospitality). Thiam later expresses to me the significance of music, food, and hospitality among Senegalese. "Music, dance, and food is in a Senegalese person's blood. We love those three and they mark the personality. We call ourselves terranga. If you go to a person's house in Senegal, they give hospitality, they sing, dance, and cook for you" (21 April 2003, personal communication).

Senegalese begin to arrive *en masse* around midnight to 1:00 a.m. and as they arrive, they greet each other warmly. DJ Clement, as directed by Thiam, shifts the musical landscape to strictly mbalax with some Africando (Senegalese salsa from New York) for the duration of the evening. One mbalax song after another blasts over the sound system by artists such as Youssou N'dour, the originator of the genre and by far the most important and favorite artist of Senegalese, Mbaye Dieye Faye, the brother of drummer and dancer Aziz Faye who leads a sabar group in Los Angeles, Thione Seck, Viviane N'dour, Omar Pène, and N'der and Le Setsima Group. The DJ leans toward the hardcore mbalax, which in Thiam's terms, is a little rougher and more intense, which inspires people to dance. The battery of sabar and tama rhythms and the soaring high-pitched géwël vocals of the mbalax indeed inspire, as the Senegalese guests soon gather into a wide circle of bodies, swaying, stepping, and clapping to the pulse beats. Quickly, one Wolof man in a black leather jacket and pinstripe slacks, leaps into the center of the circle and demonstrates a flash of stylistic dance moves with his elbows bent and his fists in the air, his knees bent deeply, and hips and legs swiveling to the rhythmic break pattern. The circle cheers and laughs and continues their pulse clapping. A surge of physical robustness fills the space as one man at a time leaps into the center of the wide circle to dance a solo and then retreats back to the outer circle. Even the chef and the two cooks take their turns dancing in the center of the circle. For the duration of evening, the mbalax music continues to dictate the spatial and sonic parameters of the event, as it binds these participants into a unified activity of alternately performing and witnessing the mastery of improvised sabar-inspired dance moves, which among Senegalese fully expresses their cultural identity.

I asked DJ Clement, the DJ for the event who is actually from Cameroon, to explain how he chose the music for the Senegalese party. I told him that I noticed that the music selections structured

the event and created a definite arc which influenced people's attitudes and dancing, depending on when people arrived and which songs he played. Early in the evening, when few Senegalese had arrived and there was an international crowd, he played mostly rhumba, soukous, and zouk. Later, as the Senegalese arrived, he played mbalax, and the Senegalese responded by forming a circle and dancing mbalax, going one at a time into the center of the circle. DJ Clement responded, "Yes, early, it was soukous, salsa, zouk. The Senegalese parties, they really just want mbalax. It went on like that till 4:00 a.m. They looked at me like, "This guy, who are you?" That's what I love in DJ'ing. Once I talk to you and you tell me that this is what we want, sometimes I use my own discretion, by looking at the audience, and I notice where people are from, America, Cuba, and the rest is from Africa. I think it is my personal job as DJ to try to please everybody, to play some popular tunes to make them feel comfortable, make them feel welcome, because not everyone there is from Senegal" (25 April 2003, personal communication).

Ghana Independence Day Celebration

Each year, Ghanaian immigrants celebrate their independence from the colonial control of Great Britain on 6 March 1957 by holding religious services, business symposia, banquets, and dance parties which sometimes spread out over a period of three weeks. On Saturday, March 6 of 2004, the Ghana Association hosts a free Independence Celebration and Business Symposium at the African Community Resource Center in Los Angeles. The invitation promises dynamic speakers engaging in issues such as minority business development, job and career training, doing business in Ghana, health care challenges and solutions, home ownership, and immigration and naturalization reform updates. Later that

night, the association presents Ghana Evening, an Independence Day banquet and dance at Ngoma Restaurant. This event reflects the educated elite of the Ghanaian community, finely dressed in colorful screenprint and batique outfits or western formalwear. For a $25 entrance fee, guests dine on traditional foods such as fufu and stew, banku and okro soup, rice and chicken, waakye, and fried plantain. After dinner, the guests spend the duration of the evening dancing to highlife music. On that same evening, another Ghana Independence event is underway at Motherland Music, an African drum store in Culver City. This event is smaller, free, and open to a more diverse audience of about twenty-five people, including Ghanaians, African Americans, Latinos and Caucasians. The concert features Marwan Mograbi and his kpanlogo troupe, The African High Command Band, and an Ewe drumming ensemble from California Institute of the Arts. The crowd is small, but appreciative.

Later, on March 20, the Ghana Association hosts an Independence Day Dance at the Mayflower Ballroom in Inglewood, which features a live band from Ghana fronted by singer Nat "Amanzeba" Brew, well-known for his hit songs from the early 1990s, "Kpanlogo Ye De," "Dzeke," and "Baawo." The bill also includes Kwesivi Tollo from Côte d'Ivoire who sings a repertoire of popular West African songs. With tickets priced at $30 ($25 in advance) the event is well-attended and well-dressed. Inside the ballroom, past the ticket table and the bar to the left, a large stage surrounded on the back and sides by a huge red velvet curtain flanks a hardwood dance floor dotted with small lighted red and blue squares. Approximately two hundred Ghanaians, smartly coifed and dressed in traditional African costumes and western suits and dresses, and sizeable gold and silver jewelry, mill about visiting or sit together at long tables and booths, which surround the dance floor. The band onstage wears

slacks and either white dress shirts or African print tops and caps. The horn player stands out in a bright silver lamé shirt and pants with a kente cloth cap. The opening band, playing tight renditions of popular highlife, zoblazo, soukous, and soca, consists of singer Kwesivi Tollo, a keyboardist, guitarist, bassist, drumset drummer, conga and kpanlogo drummer, two horn players, a female back-up singer, and three female dancers. People slowly begin to advance to the dance floor, mostly in couples to sway and step to the coastal West African sounds. The interactive performance between the band and the folks dancing on dance floor has a definite arc, which begins with couples dancing with controlled composure, with elbows bent, forearms slightly raised with light fists or straightened palms, shoulders soft and pliant, stepping in a two-step fashion to the ground rhythm and moving gently at the hips. Eventually the tone loosens as the musicians warm the crowd.

During the drum break of one particular song, the three dancers onstage, who are scantily clothed compared to the guests, wearing African print halter tops, wrap skirts and beads around their waists, turn their backs to the audience, bend forward, and shake their hips and derrieres expertly to the rhythmic patterns in the break. One dancer bends all the way forward and touches the floor, and backs up her derriere to the singer's crotch area as he grinds into her playfully. He swipes at her buttocks with his white handkerchief and looks at the audience as if to say, "It's hot!" Then the dancer, still shaking her hips, spreads her legs outward and the singer slides underneath her on the floor and looks up. The crowd becomes increasingly excited and pushes closer and closer towards the stage to get a view of the performance. With people now pressed towards the stage, Tollo grabs a woman from the audience and pulls her onstage to perform the same dance. She follows the other dancer,

turns her back to the crowd, bends forward and shakes and pops her derriere to the rhythms. Tollo then pulls up several more ladies, one at a time to perform the suggestive moves with the onstage dancer. Each woman's performance is greeted with cheers of approval as people continue to rush the stage to get a better view. Now, women in the audience begin to dance more suggestively in tight circles, with one woman at a time going into the center to flirtatiously grind down low and shake and pop her buttocks. The band's "break dancing" has loosened the audience and bound them together in a common activity that merges traditional African dance with an elite western sensibility. The musicians in the band play nearly non-stop for several hours, also backing up the headliner, Nat "Amanzeba" Brew.

A Ghanaian King's Visit to Los Angeles

Just down the street from Universal Studios and a stone's throw from the Hollywood Freeway on a warm August day in 2004, a black town car followed by three other cars pull into the small parking lot of the Pacifica Radio station, KPFK. From the limo emerges the king of Ghana's Eastern Region (Okyenhene) draped in a deep indigo velvet robe boldly accented with large gold beaded leopards. His fingers are cluttered with gold rings bearing adinkra symbols. Close behind him, his steward, dressed in a white robe with blocks of black and orange adinkra symbols, holds tight to the massive leopard patterned umbrella, which must cover the head of the chief as they walk a few yards from the car to the back door of the radio station. Behind them are the king's two personal assistants, tall handsome young men wearing long kente cloth robes and sunglasses, a second-tier chief (Gyasehene), and the

king's wife. Several other Ghanaian ladies dressed in traditional screenprint outfits of tops, skirts, and wraps, follow behind.

Inside the radio station, the king and one of his assistants get situated behind microphones in the station's control room, while a local Ghanaian musician, Tumi Ebo Ansa, sets up in the other booth and plays and sings a guitar highlife song on air to welcome the king and his entourage. Following a brief introduction, the Okyenhene speaks with DJ Nnamdi Moweta about the duties of his office and some of his humanitarian aims which include promoting a charitable organization called Free Wheelchair Mission which sends wheelchairs to physically challenged people in Africa.

At the close of the interview, Nnamdi asks the king if he would speak a little Twi to his fellow Ghanaians in the listening audience. Instead of speaking Twi, he chooses to sing the Ghanaian national anthem and discuss the significance of the text.

The National Anthem of Ghana

God Bless our homeland Ghana
And make our nation great and strong.
Bold to defend forever
The cause of Freedom and of Rights;
Fill our hearts with true humility,
Make us cherish fearless honesty,
And help us to resist oppressors rule
With all our will and might forevermore.

Hail to the name, O Ghana,
To thee we make our solemn vow;

Steadfast to build together
A nation strong in Unity;
With our gifts of mind and strength of arm,
Whether night or day, in the midst of the storm
In ev'ry need, whate'er the call may be,
To serve thee, Ghana, now and forevermore.

Raise high the flag of Ghana
And one with Africa advance;
Black Star of hope and honor
To all who thirst for liberty;
Where the banner of Ghana free flies,
May the way to freedom truly lie,
Arise, arise O sons of Ghana land,
And under God march on forevermore!

The Okyenhene remarks that, "The words say that we have a collective responsibility to our land. If we make it to the Committee of Nations, we can pat ourselves on the back. If we don't, we have ourselves to blame."

After the interview, Nnamdi asks the king if he will pour libations to bless the new control room and he, in turn, instructs the second tier king, the Gyasehene, to do the honors. This will mark the third official blessing of the new control room, following last Saturday's program which featured two blessings, one by Yoruban Awo Tóyin Oládòkun and the other by Ewe Habøbø former-president Kobla Agbanyo, with myself playing drums during each pouring of libations. For the current blessing, the Gyasehene and the assistant have to quickly adjust the style of their robes for the occasion by taking the large kente cloth robes off their

shoulders and pulling them down around their waists. The Gyasehene pours some gin into a glass and sets another empty glass on the floor in front of him to catch the spilt liquor so as not to soil the carpet. He chants an invocation to the ancestors and then bends down low and dribbles three drops of liquor into the glass below. He chants additional lines of the invocation in Twi, each time pouring three drips of gin and then checks with the king for approval. The king nods and says, "Good."

After the radio appearance, the king and his entourage drive to the Hollywood Hills home of a video and television producer for a private reception. As the Okyenhene, Osagyefuo Amoatia Ofori Panin, his umbrella holder and horn-blower, Offei Yirenkyi, the first lady, Elizabeth Adwoa Asabea Ofori Attah, and the Gyasehene, Osabarima Darkwa Woe II, process along the bricked backyard patio past tables of wine and cheese and a mixed crowd of Ghanaian, African American, Caucasian, and Asian guests, they are serenaded by Tumi Ebo Ansa who sings and plays highlife tunes on his guitar. The king, his wife, and the Gyasehene sit in chairs on a bricked terrace, which is suitably higher than the other guests and surrounded by lush tropical plants. The guests stand in a line on the sunny patio to file through and greet the royal group and have their pictures taken with the king. After a while the Okyenhene gives a brief speech about the purpose of his visit, which is to help raise awareness and funds for the Free Wheelchair Mission and he introduces Emmanuel Ofosu Yeboah, a young amputee who has been competing in and winning bicycle races in Africa. He takes a few questions from the guests. After a while, the royal entourage has to leave to go to yet another event, a durbar for the Ghana Association in the city of Orange.

A Ga Homowo Festival in Los Angeles

The homowo festival is an annual harvest and thanksgiving festival of the Ga-speaking people of the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. The festival recounts the migration of the Ga to their current settlement along the coastline and celebrates the end of famine and the thanksgiving of a surplus harvest. A lunar holiday based on the native calendar, the date of the homowo, which is generally in August, but occasionally in July or September, is set by traditional priests after the millet is sown in May. The homowo is always set on a Saturday, which marks the end of the native calendar, with the following Monday being the first day of the next calendar year. As a preparatory sanction for the homowo, the fetish priests impose a thirty-day ban on drumming and noise making leading up to the date of the festival. During the time of the noise ban, anyone caught drumming or making excessive noise can be arrested by local chiefs. There is also a one-month ban imposed on fishing, which in a practical sense, allows a surplus of fish to gather in the sea which will produce a larger catch when the fishermen return to work to fish for the festival. In Ghana, the homowo begins by an elder male pouring libations to ask for the ancestors' blessings. Second, the elders sprinkle fish, palmnut soup, and *kpekple* (cornmeal) on the ground to share food with the ancestors and ask for their blessings on the event. The main activities involve dancing to traditional drumming troupes playing kpanlogo, *oge*, and *kolomashie* and to a DJ's selection of popular highlife music, and feasting on palmnut soup with kpekple and fish. On Sunday of the festival, people visit one another's homes, grieve over dead relations, and settle disputes over a drink or two.

The Ga-Adangbe Association of Southern California has hosted a local homowo festival for its members for the past eleven years. Certain adaptations have been necessary, especially in terms of the drumming and noise ban. As one Ga Association officer says, "Out here you can't tell your neighbor not to play his music or tell people not to do commercial fishing. Basically, you can't impose your culture on anyone else" (16 August 2004, personal communication). Decontextualized from its social and cultural context and devoid of the proper preparatory period of the noise and fishing ban, the activities of the festival are condensed to their essential parts, which include pouring libations, eating ritual foods, dancing to traditional and popular music, and socializing. For the Ga in Southern California, the date of the homowo is set for Saturday of Labor Day weekend, when a large number of families are able to attend. In the backyard of a suburban home in Cypress, California, an elder man pours libations of gin and chants an invocation to the ancestors, asking them to bless the event. Then he takes the kpekple, which the women have sifted, and sprinkles it along the ground of the entire backyard, followed by bits of fish and soup. The women have set up an outdoor cooking area on the patio, where they take turns stirring palmnut soup with fish in large stewpots atop the outdoor grills. Highlife and kpanlogo music provide a constant sonic backdrop. After the guests have had their fill of the traditional meal of kpekple and soup, the music is turned up and people begin to congregate in the living room that has been converted into a dance floor. The rest of the evening into the early morning hours is spent dancing to tapes and CDs of highlife and kpanlogo music.

The following day, a homowo after party is held at another association member's home in Brea, a suburb near Anaheim. Several families have gathered on the abnormally hot

September day to celebrate the traditional new year by relaxing, eating, and listening to Ghanaian music. The women have set up an outdoor cooking area on the concrete patio adjacent to the kitchen where they prepare *fufu* (yam dough) with goat meat soup and fish soup along with an appetizer of *kelewele* (spicy fried plantain). As I enter the party, I go into the kitchen and introduce myself to the women, and explain that I have been invited by the host, Blado. The women welcome me and point me to the living room, where the men are sitting closely together and chatting. I greet the seated men customarily by shaking hands with each of them counter-clockwise from the right side of the room. We share stories about the University of Ghana at Legon, where many of the Ga immigrants studied and where I studied African music for one year in the early 1990s. The host invites me to play drums, so I pick up a kpanlogo drum from against the wall and play the basic kpanlogo pattern:

po . pa tsa dzim po do . po do . pa dzim . pa tsa

Another man picks up a small djembe and plays the bass pattern consisting of alternating bass and muted strokes. The men excitedly clap and sing kpanlogo songs for some time.

As the women mill about in the kitchen and patio cooking area, the men discuss business, social issues, and politics in the living room and backyard. Every so often, the discussion reaches a fevered pitch, usually on the topic of politics, as several men at once stand and shout their points of view. Then they settle back down and change the subject. In the backyard, as the sun drops and the breeze wafts in, I ask the men to describe their experiences with family rituals such as outdoorings, weddings, and funerals since they have lived in Southern California. The men consistently express regret over having lost much of their traditional culture, not knowing what many of the ritual gestures mean, and not trying

hard enough to pass on the traditional culture to their children. Meanwhile, a tape of kpanlogo music plays on the stereo inside and a video of a Ghanaian drum and dance troupe from Colorado plays on the TV, while the children play card games and run in and out of the house. I suggest to them that "culture happens," meaning that tradition is not stationary and that by performing the homowo festival, playing Ga music, eating traditional foods, and speaking Ga, their children are absorbing the sights and sounds and developing value orientations towards these cultural activities, even though they are decontextualized and fragmented.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown how African mutual aid associations serve as channels for promoting various levels of cultural identity for African immigrants abroad and for connecting people with families, communities, and religious organizations at home. Associations target different levels of personal and group identity, from pan-African to national to ethnic identification.

The pan-African association in Los Angeles, the United African Federation, accepts members from all African countries and works to promote the cultural, social, and political interests of its membership. This organization often gives a public face to the African immigrant communities by sponsoring political events, business conferences, and musical and cultural festivals such as the annual African Marketplace and Cultural Faire. Ghanaian immigrants often juggle their time and money among ethnic, national, and pan-African organizations. The ethnic associations provide the means, both financially and socially, to

maintain and reproduce ethno-linguistic identities and responsibilities. The national association – the Ghana Association of Southern California – acts as an umbrella organization over the ethnic associations and promotes a national identity for all Ghanaians. It provides financial assistance and hosts cultural and musical events for its membership and the community at large. Senegalese immigrants avoid reproducing or promoting difference along ethnic lines and instead, work towards promoting a national identity through the Senegalese Association of Southern California and the Senegalese Women's Association. Senegalese Mourides also benefit from attending monthly da'ira meetings, during which members pray together, read the Qu'ran, listen to recitations of Qu'ranic verse, sing qasa'id, and discuss business matters.

The events that the associations sponsor, such as public festivals, national and ethnic occasions, religious holidays, political meetings, and family celebrations, create spheres in which people interact with each other and build communities around complexes of shared identities. The ethnographic examples of several association events have shown that immigrants reproduce varying levels of cultural and religious identity by performing, listening, and dancing to music, along with other modes of cultural expression such as traditional attire, food, and language. Through these performative modes, immigrants build coalitions and networks of like-identified people, enabling them to resist assimilating into the dominant culture, while also advancing the future interests of their families at home and abroad.

Figures 7, 8, 9, 10 (L to R). Ghana Association of Southern California announcements: Independence Day Dance with a DJ, Independence Day Dance with live bands, Independence Day religious service, and End of Year Dance and Fundraiser.

OBITUARY

Ghana Association of Southern California & Friends of Ghana
and
The Head of Family, Aheto Fudzie Family, Home & Abroad; The Head and Members of The Ladzekpo Family, Home & Abroad; The Akpanya & Dovlo Families, Home & Abroad; The Senaya & Allied Families, Home & Abroad

Announce with sorrow the death of:

Harriet Sitsofe Aheto
(January 1, 1960 - May 24, 2004)

(aka Auntie, Happy)

VIEWING & MEMORIAL SERVICE:
Saturday, June 12, 2004
2:00 P.M.
Chapel of the Bastian & Perrott Mortuary
18728 Parthenia St., Northridge, CA 91324
(818) 886-8600

RECEPTION:
Saturday, June 12, 2004
6:00 P.M. to 2:00 A.M.
Cafeteria, Audubon Charter Middle School
4120 11th Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90008

DIRECTIONS TO BASTIAN & PERROTT MORTUARY
From Los Angeles:
Take US-101 N (HOLLYWOOD FWY/HARBOR FWY)
Take the RESEDA BLVD exit
Turn RIGHT onto RESEDA BLVD.
Turn LEFT onto PARTHENIA ST.

From Valencia:
Take I-405 S toward SANTA MONICA.
Take the NORDHOFF STREET exit
Turn RIGHT onto NORDHOFF ST.
Turn LEFT onto RESEDA BLVD.
Turn RIGHT onto PARTHENIA ST.

DIRECTIONS TO AUDUBON CHARTER MIDDLE SCHOOL
From Northridge:
Merge onto I-405 S.
Merge onto I-10 E/ROSA PARKS FRWY toward LOS ANGELES.
Take the CRENSHAW BLVD exit exit number 9.
Turn RIGHT onto CRENSHAW BLVD.
Turn LEFT onto W MARTIN LUTHER KING JR BLVD.
Turn RIGHT onto 11TH AVE.

For further information, please contact:
Nana Osei Tutu [redacted] • Nana Bill Assibey [redacted] • Mr. John Dodzie [redacted]
Mr. Kobla Ladzekpo [redacted] • Mr. Alfred Asafoko Ladzekpo [redacted]
Mr Kofi Ladzekpo [redacted] • Mr. Agbi Ladzekpo [redacted]
Rev. & Mrs. Henry August [redacted] • Mr. Ambrose August [redacted]
Mrs. Christine Attipoe-Tsikata [redacted] • Mr. Osei and Mrs. Lynda Sarpong [redacted]
Mr. Charles Senaya [redacted] • Mr. Lawrence Blebo [redacted]
Ms. Jennifer Wilson [redacted] • Mrs. Vivian Doe [redacted]

GHANA ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Cordially invites you to attend

"Ghana Youth & Family Day Picnic"

In recognition of the Ghana Youth Development Program

Saturday, July 17, 2004

Location: Kenneth Hahn Park, Los Angeles
(4100 S. La Cienega Blvd. CA 90056, Los Angeles, near Stocker)
Parking is $5.00/ Vehicle Carpooling is encouraged.

Time: 9:00 A.M. – 4: 00 P.M.

The picnic is a potluck-games-fellowship.
Comes on out, bring your picnic baskets and enjoy a family day with all Ghanaian youths and their families, and as usual, all friends of Ghana.

For further information, please contact:
Nana Osei-Tutu [redacted] • John Dodzie [redacted] • Dan Aggrenang [redacted]
Kobla Agbanye [redacted] • Ama Okla [redacted] • Christina Richardson [redacted]
Theresa Amofah [redacted] • Flora Sampson [redacted] • Estelia Acheampong [redacted]
Fresnia Appiah [redacted] • Elsie Cissie [redacted] • Archibold Ada-Price [redacted]
John Sangmoah [redacted] • D. J. Nice [redacted] • Akosua Boateng [redacted]

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GHANA ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Cordially Invites

All Ghanaians and Friends of Ghana to a special meeting with

Dr. Kwame Donkoh-Fordwor
Chairman, Golden Development Holding Company Limited (GDHC), Ghana
Former President, African Development Bank

INVESTMENT PROMOTION IN GHANA
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Saturday, June 7, 2003

Meeting Sites:

LOS ANGELES COUNTY
Christ Citadel International Church
1122 South La Cienega Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90035
9:00 am - 11:30 am

INLAND EMPIRE
Holy Spirit Power Ministry
7863 Sierra Avenue, Fontana, CA 92336
4:00 pm - 6:00 pm

For information please call any of the numbers below:
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COME JOIN A PARTY WITH

THE SENEGALESE WOMEN OF L.A.

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Enjoy Traditional African Drum
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Figures 11, 12, 13, 14 (L to R). Ghana Association of Southern California announcements: An obituary and funeral announcement, Family Day Picnic, special business and investment meeting, and a Senegalese Women's Association Party.

Figures 15, 16, 17, 18 (L to R). Ghana ethnic association announcements: Asante Cultural Society Enstoolment of a new chief, Awutu-Effutu (Fante) Association Dance, Okwahuman (Kwawu) Association Easter Dance, and Ga-Adangbe Association Homowo Festival.

Figure 19. Senegalese restaurant Bistro 4040 hosts the Senegal Independence Day Dance and Banquet.
Figure 20. Early in the evening a few guests dance to soukous and rhumba while others dine on a buffet of Senegalese dishes and American soul food. (photos by Sherri Canon)

Figure 21. DJ Nnamdi Moweta and Chef Alle Thiam at the Senegal Independence Day Dance.
Figure 22. Lamine, a cook at Bistro 4040, takes his turn dancing to mbalax in the center of the circle while those in the outer circle clap to the pulse beats. (photos by Sherri Canon)

Figure 23. Kwashi Amevuvor teaches children the Agbadza bell pattern at the Ghana family picnic.
Figure 24. DJ Clement plays rhumba, soukous, and mbalax at the Senegal Independence Day Dance.
(photos by Sherri Canon)

Figure 25. Nana Kofi Akuoko Nti, Chief of the Asante Cultural Society, and Nana Ama Serwah Ampaafo, Queen Mother, at the Ghana Independence Day religious service. Figure 26. Nana Osei-Tutu, president of the Ghana Association of Southern California sits at the high table in the cafeteria following the religious service. (photos by Sherri Canon)

Figure 27. Okyenhene Osagyefuo Amoatia Ofori Panin interviewed by DJ Nnamdi on Radio Afrodicia. Figure 28. The Okyenhene speaks at a reception in the Hollywood Hills. Figure 29. Tumi Ansa plays and sings highlife songs in honor of the king's visit. (photos by Sherri Canon)

Chapter Four

Naming Ceremonies

The Pro's and Con's of Naming

The birth of a child can evoke mixed feelings for African immigrants in the United States. On one hand, a child is a blessing to a family. A child represents an increase in the status of the family as an extended social unit. The majority of African immigrants believe that a child born in America will have more opportunities than in Africa, which ultimately signifies an increase in the family's investment. However, immigrant parents express deep concern that American culture threatens their traditional African social and familial values, pointing to issues such as violence and sex in the media, crime, individualism, and consumerism. Immigrant parents complain that they are unable to compete with American television, the popular music industry, and a youth oriented consumer market that portrays youths disrespecting elders, blacks represented as criminals and outcasts, and a general devaluation of the work ethic. Parents also find their children becoming victims of discrimination and negative stereotypes about Africa in the schools. In response to excessive ostracizing, African children tend to assimilate into the "Black melting pot" of African American culture. This concerns African parents who believe that associating with African America offers fewer economic and social opportunities for black immigrants in the long run. Perhaps the most disheartening aspect for immigrant parents is that children born in America

miss out on an essential part of their identity as Africans who have been culturally rooted and socialized in Africa. To counteract these threats of identity crisis and downward assimilation, African immigrants work hard to instill traditional African values in their children as they grow up in Los Angeles. Some families resort to sending their young children home to Africa to be schooled and socialized and then have them return when they are ready to attend university.

Against this backdrop, a baby naming ceremony in the Diaspora is a potentially conflicted event for immigrant parents. To grasp the intricacies of this conflict, it is necessary to introduce the naming ceremony's key components and cultural significance in West African societies. First and foremost, the naming rite in Africa is a social arena for publicizing the name of a newborn child to a family and a community. The act of naming establishes the identity of the child within the ethnic group, clan, and kinship network. The selection of a child's name is a serious endeavor for West Africans, who believe that the name given to a child will not only influence the child's disposition and behavior, but will reflect on the quality and character of the entire family. Following a birth, it is customary in many West African societies to leave a baby and mother in seclusion during the first week to ensure their protection, both physically and spiritually. The naming rite marks the end of the period of seclusion and introduces the baby to the community. During the naming ceremony, families perform a series of symbolic rites to further provide spiritual protection for the child. In addition, the naming ceremony includes a number of customary rites that instruct the child about proper codes of behavior and moral rectitude, such as honesty, hard work, and respect

for others. Finally, and central to this study, the naming ceremony introduces the baby into a complex performance context in which music and dance are key carriers of cultural identity.

African immigrants wrestle with the pro's and con's of whether to perform a naming ceremony for a baby born in America. On the positive side, a naming ceremony in the Diaspora grants immigrant parents an opportunity to inculcate the newest member of the family into the sphere of African cultural and religious values. The ceremony consists of two segments – a religious ritual in the early morning followed by a more secular, traditional celebration in the afternoon or evening. Surrounded by adults and children dancing to loud African music, eating traditional food, and dressed in elegant traditional clothing and jewelry, the newborn absorbs the sounds, smells, and sights of its own cultural heritage. "It is by standing around, watching interaction, and gradually participating that children learn the nature of their culture and society, and absorb traditional values, including ideas about the nature of what is desirable" (Ames and Gamble n.d.:155). Second, naming ceremonies are hardly regarded as private family events, but are social occasions for large numbers of people in the community to gather and celebrate. Here, African immigrants can gather with like-identified members of a community and strengthen and rekindle relationships. For immigrants, musical performance at family ceremonies, particularly in the form of dancing, is a way of magnifying local cultural identities and more vividly realizing ideas of home. As Lucy Duran surmised about Senegambians in London who danced more intensely than those in Dakar, "Maybe it had something to do with identity; the further from home, the more need to act Wolof" (Duran 1989:280). Third, lifecycle ceremonies help support families financially in their new endeavor or in time of need, whether the ritual event is a naming ceremony,

wedding, or funeral. Monetary donations by guests to the family help offset the costs of the ceremony and the expense of raising a baby.

On the negative side, a naming ceremony in the Diaspora may also be accompanied by an impending sense of anxiety over the child's destiny and identity. While immigrant parents identify themselves according to the culture in which they grew up, their American-born children are caught between identifying with their parent's culture and the culture in which they are born. Sometimes, African immigrants will request that their family members back home in Africa perform the requisite lifecycle ceremonies in their absence. One recent arrival to Los Angeles from Ghana requested that his family back home perform a full-blown naming ceremony for his daughter who was born in America. He asked that they videotape the ceremony so that when she gets older, he can show her the tape and reveal the deep significance of her cultural heritage. Meanwhile, the birthfather performed a makeshift naming ceremony in a Los Angeles mosque with a few friends. He chose not to take pictures of the event, because it lacked the culture-specific ritual qualities and he did not want to memorialize it. Instead, he regards the videotape of the ritual performed by his family in Ghana as his daughter's official naming ceremony.

Second, those who do choose to hold a naming ceremony must make do with the available resources. Ghanaians and Senegalese both belong to relatively small immigrant communities in Los Angeles. Among them are few qualified drummers and singers to perform traditional music as it would be performed at home. In response, most families play their own personal CDs or cassette tapes or hire a DJ to play music from their home area. It is important to keep in mind that during Muslim naming ceremonies, music is not appropriate

during the naming rite in the morning due to its religious context. Instead, Muslims from Senegal and Ghana play tapes of Qur'anic recitation during the religious segment of the ritual. Mourides from Senegal may also play tapes of *qasa'id*, oral poetry of Cheikh Amadou Bamba set to repetitive song forms. For most Ghanaian Christians, the traditional naming ritual has little or no music associated with the religious portion of the rite. However, Ghanaian Christians have recently appropriated the traditional naming rite into a Christian church context, during which music and dance are key components. During the more secular segment of the naming ceremony, which follows the naming rite, both Muslims and Christians make dancing to popular music a primary activity. Third, some immigrants who have failed to make acquaintances with like-identified individuals or to get involved in local African associations can feel extraordinarily cut off from their social and cultural homes. If they decide to forego the requisite naming ceremony for a child (especially for a first child), it may cause anxiety, guilt, and sense of loss.

How do immigrant parents reconcile these anxieties regarding their child's first ever lifecycle ritual? How do immigrants, who belong to kinship-based social systems which uphold a host of customary rites, religious rites, familial obligations, and age group responsibilities manage to reproduce the naming ceremony in a style that will ensure the newborn's spiritual protection and introduction into the community? In terms of performance practice, how are immigrants' notions of authenticity and appropriate behavior re-negotiated in the new environment? I am also interested in the practice of videotaping naming ceremonies, in terms of how videotaping has changed the styles or goals of performance, and how videotaped media of naming ceremonies play a part in connecting families

transnationally. How do immigrants adapt the ritual to meet the limitations of the dominant society? On the other hand, how do they creatively Africanize the landscape and soundscape of the given spaces to meet their own needs? How are identities shifted or reconfigured during the performance? How is musical performance implicated in pushing identity in one direction or another? And finally, how do Ghanaians and Senegalese, having different religious and cultural histories, compare in their performance of naming ceremonies?

Themes of dislocation, disrupted kinship networks, and the transformative power of music and dance in ritual contexts have fueled my inquiry in developing a comparative analysis of African immigrant performance and identity politics. The ethnographic analysis of performance during lifecycle rituals among Ghanaian and Senegalese immigrants in Los Angeles is imagined along two axes of comparison. The first axis concerns the differences between how rituals are typically performed in Africa and how they are performed by African immigrants in America. In Africa, lifecycle rituals are situated in social systems that uphold and regulate particular social roles and responsibilities, and support musical performances that deeply signify notions of identity, history, and ritual efficacy. In America, the rituals take place in a fairly hostile and limiting environment and are attended by a small percentage of the members of the extended family and social group. Fully cognizant that they are unable to perform the rites exactly as they would at home in Africa, immigrants do their best to recreate the essential components of the ceremony, using their new environment to its best effect.

The second axis of comparison looks at the differences and similarities between immigrants from Ghana and Senegal. Of utmost interest in this comparative mode are

performance practices that mark religious, ethnic, caste, and national identity. The most apparent difference between Ghanaian and Senegalese immigrants in Southern California is their religious affiliation. Senegalese immigrants reflect the make-up of their country, which is about 94 percent Muslim. The majority of Senegalese who migrate come from Dakar, a cosmopolitan city with a rich Islamic history. Ghanaian immigrants, however, reflect the southern half of Ghana, which is majority Christian. Because of Ghana's long history with European and American missionaries saturating the coastline, along with the recent explosion of local evangelical missionization, the majority of Ghanaians from the southern region are Christian and have had more opportunities for education and thus, for emigration abroad. Within these national groups, there are also cultural distinctions between ethnic groups that are also necessary to identify and compare. For instance, Ghanaians who identify themselves within different ethnic groups, such as Ewe, Asante, or Ga, approach the naming ceremony with slightly different cultural and performance practices.

Performing Naming Ceremonies in Ghana and Senegal

Before we can interpret how immigrants adapt their rituals to their new surroundings, we will first look at how naming ceremonies are performed in Ghana and Senegal. This data is drawn from my interviews with Ghanaian and Senegalese immigrants and supported by ethnographic accounts of African and Africanist scholars. In both Senegal and Ghana, families celebrate naming ceremonies on the seventh day after a baby's birth. The details of the ceremony differ slightly according to ethnic group and religious orientation, but maintain the same essential activities and aims. Both Ghanaians and Senegalese, regardless of ethnic

group, caste, or religious faith, distinguish between the "religious" and the "traditional," or "cultural," segments of the ceremony. This is not to suggest that religion and culture are perceived as separate or even separable in African thought or practice. Indeed, "African spiritual experience is one in which the 'divine' or the 'sacred' realm interpenetrates into the daily experience of the human person so much that religion, culture, and society are imperatively interrelated" (Olupona 2000:xv). However, the distinctions between religious (as in Christian or Islamic) and traditional practice, especially in the performance of rituals, is rooted in the perception that the adoption of Christianity and Islam by West African societies did not pre-date traditional cultural practice. And considering that the adoption of Christianity and Islam has introduced certain prohibitions of traditional African spirituality and cultural practice, people continue to negotiate between religious and traditional aspects in the context of performance.

The religious segment of the naming ceremony takes place at dawn or early morning of the seventh day after the baby's birth. The brief morning ceremony has a devotional and somber quality. It involves publicizing the child's name along with prayers and a light meal. Family members also perform a series of symbolic rites meant to spiritually protect the child as well as rites to teach the child about proper codes of behavior and moral rectitude. Muslims usually perform the morning ceremony in a mosque or in the parents' home. Because of the deeply religious character of this event, music is not appropriate, except for a tape or live performance of Qur'anic recitation. Christians perform the morning ceremony in the parents' home and invite a family elder to officiate. Recently, though, African Christians have appropriated the traditional naming rite into a baby dedication held in the church, with a

pastor officiating. By melding religious and traditional practices, African Christians stake a claim in both modernity and traditional kinship-based society. The baby dedication in the church should not be confused with a baptism in the Protestant sense, which takes place later in life when an individual chooses to be saved and become a member of the faith. Whether performed at home or in church, Ghanaian Christians usually incorporate music into the religious segment of the naming ceremony, as well as the traditional segment of the ceremony (the outdooring), which follows.

As noted above, Africans distinguish between the religious and the traditional, or cultural, segments of the ritual, although both segments do integrate both religious and traditional elements. In Ghana and Senegal, families host the traditional segment of the naming ceremony later that day or the following day at the parents' home, village compound, or a reception hall. This traditional, or cultural, side of the naming ceremony is a grand social affair where parents introduce their new baby to the extended family and the community. It consists of a full day and night of music, dancing, socializing, and eating. Family, friends, and association members donate money to help offset the expense of the party as well as the expense of raising the child. In Ghana, this celebration is called an "outdooring," which signifies the first occasion at which the baby is brought out of doors after being secluded for the first week of its life. The name for this social event among the Wolof of Senegal is *ndowtel*, which literally means "cash contribution," placing the emphasis on the money which is contributed by the guests for the infant's well-being.

Naming Ceremonies in Senegal

Turning to Senegal in more detail, the naming ceremony, or *bapteme* (baptism), includes two distinct segments. Different ethnic groups such as Wolof, Serer, Fulani, and Mandinka share many elements of the ceremony, but differ slightly in the ritual details. The Wolof naming ceremony begins with the naming rite (*ngente*) in the early morning of the seventh day after a baby's birth. This rite is largely based on Islamic tradition but is infused with traditional African practices as well, particularly those rites involving women. The naming rite is followed by a large-scale party to celebrate the naming of the baby (ndowtel) later that day or on the following day. This celebration is heavily geared towards music, dancing, socializing, and a systematic gift exchange. Many of the activities in the ndowtel are considered *afeer-u jigeen* (the business of women).

A Wolof naming ceremony performed in Upper Saalum, The Gambia in 1950 provides a basis on which to compare contemporary rituals in Senegal. Wolof in the adjacent countries of Senegal and The Gambia – often referred to Senegambia – share many cultural and religious practices and thus, the ethnographic description provides a relevant historical base for comparison. During the week preceding a naming ceremony that David Ames and David Gamble observed in 1950, several precautions are taken to increase the baby's spiritual protection. At the birthing, a midwife cuts the umbilical cord with an iron knife, which is later placed beneath the baby's pillow, adding strong protection against witches and evil spirits. The midwife quickly rubs down the baby with oil and washes it with soap and water. Before accepting the breast, the infant is given *safara*, a liquid charm made from water used to soak up a wooden writing board inked with Qur'anic verses. Today, similar charms are

made by soaking pieces of prayer paper into an ornamental vessel (*amte*). This process figures into intensive healing practices by specialists who synthesize Islamic and traditional healing arts (Roberts and Roberts 2003). Next, salt is applied to the baby's lips to encourage speech. The placenta is buried in the back yard "together with salt, broken potsherds, cotton, and kola nuts" and marked with a stone in the ground (Ames and Gamble n.d.:143).

A fire burns in the small dark hut where the mother and baby will stay for the next week. Before retiring with the newborn, the mother must jump over the fire in four directions, an exercise she will repeat seven days later at the naming rite. The midwife holds the baby towards the mother and draws it away three times before giving it to her and then sprinkles the baby with a solution of *suna* (early millet) water, a blessed substance. The bed is cloaked in a thin cloth that serves double duty to ward off mosquitoes as well as evil spirits or carriers of the evil eye.

Wolof, like many Africans, believe that the first week of a baby's life is a critical time which demands special care and isolation for the mother and baby. A number of rites are performed to protect the mother and the newborn from spiritual and physical harm during this initial week and at the naming rite. Protective forces can come from natural items such as plants with protective value including kola, millet, and cotton; from religious sources such as Qur'anic verses and prayer; from human craft such as iron; and from appropriate comments and behavior. Following are a few of the protective rites observed by Ames and Gamble. Every day during the first week the baby is given safara to drink. "A branch of the rat (Combretum sp.) tree is stuck in the ground at the right hand side of the door when entering" (Ames and Gamble n.d.:145) to signal that a newborn is inside and that the room should be

avoided by people wearing powerful amulets or by women who have experienced pain after childbirth. The branch also wards off evil spirits and maliciousness. Amulets are filled with Qur'anic verses and tied around the baby's wrists or neck. When met with visitors, the mother will avert compliments to discourage evil intentions from jealous people or witches. Visitors take care not to compliment the child or mother, because it is believed that praise may cause harm or evil by *gemmeñ* (mouth) or *lammeñ* (tongue). "In rural areas a mother is better pleased if one says ‘Ah, it is an ugly child’" (147).

The naming ceremony in question shares many attributes with neighboring Muslim peoples such as the Mandinka and Fuuta Toro Fulbe. The day before the ritual, boys are sent around the village and to neighboring villages to announce the naming ceremony. *Géwël* (members of the praise singer, musician, and historian caste), though not formally invited, hear about the ceremonies and turn out to play instruments, sing, and praise the parents. Others in the *nyeeño* caste such as leatherworkers (*wude*) and blacksmiths (*tëgg*) also attend, knowing they will receive obligatory gifts from the parents if the parents are *géer*, or members of the free-born caste. Women of the compound prepare food for all the guests. Their day begins by pounding millet and rice in the early morning, getting help from neighboring girls who come round to help and socialize. Meanwhile, the birthmother bathes herself and her baby in water prepared with protective herbs and other substances that defend against evil spirits and witches. She gets dressed up in her best dress and jewelry and has her hair styled. As guests arrive they present small gifts to help offset the expense of the ritual. Women usually bring sour milk, chickens, millet, or rice and hand them to the mother, while men bring cash, millet, or kola nuts and hand theirs to the father.

This particular naming ceremony officially begins when the paternal grandmother and the maternal grandmother's representative bring the baby to the center of the compound along with a mat and clay pot containing water and red kola (for long life), white kola (for good luck), suna (early millet), salt, and cotton. The maternal grandmother sits on the mat and holds the baby who is wrapped in strip cloth, a kind of cloth used regularly in lifecycle rituals, as a garment during boys' circumcision, a head covering for a bride, and a shroud for a burial. Then the baby's head is carefully shaved and the hair saved which will later be stuffed into a leather amulet and tied around the baby's wrists or neck for protection. Now the name, chosen by the father, is officially announced to the crowd. Géwël respond by singing praises to the child's parents.

The imam, leading a group of elders, prays blessings over the baby and spits into its ears. Wolof believe that the blessings inherent in the words of a prayer are transported through the saliva. As Birago Diop has expressed, "Like honey in water, speech, good or bad, dissolves in saliva which retains part of its power" (Ames and Gamble n.d.:152). The imam whispers the call to prayer in the baby's right ear and the lihan (same sequence without repeating the Arabic phrases) in its left ear. Pieces of *sarax* (charity) in the form of sweetened millet cakes are divided among the crowd by géwël. The imam then officiates the sacrificing of a goat, saying blessings and then cutting the animal's throat, allowing the blood to drain into the ground. Different parts of the goat are distributed to the imam, elders, and family members according to rank.

A few of the géwël go into the birthing house to play *tama* (small hourglass tension drums), beating out drum dialogues that accompany their praise chants to the mother. They

continue drumming outside for female relations who want to dance. Later, a neighbor comes by with a *sabar* drum to provide more rhythms for dancing, but is eventually asked to stop in deference to an ailing relative. The festivities and visiting go on until the sun fades away.

Today, a deeply Muslim sensibility continues to influence the details of the morning naming rite in Senegal. Seven days after the birth, family and friends gather at the home of the parents or other family member, while some Muslim families choose to have the ceremony at a mosque. Given the religious nature of the ngente, men are the dominant performers. The spatial layout and the ritual activities are segregated by gender (see Ebin 1996). In the main room, men sit barefoot on rugs against the walls and in the middle of the room. Outside in the compound, women prepare the breakfast of *'lah* (corn or millet cereal, or porridge) which they will serve following the announcement of the name and prayers. An elder female of the family shaves the baby's head over a calabash bowl containing water, red kola nuts and white kola nuts. The hair is weighed against the weight of gold and an equal amount is given to the poor as charity. Melismatic renditions of Qur'anic verses, either sung live or recorded, ease the men into a state of devotion. At Mouride naming rituals, loudspeakers broadcast live renderings or tapes of qasa'id.

> "The men dance to the sacred music in slow, sweeping movements, holding their arms aloft so that their great sleeves waft like wings. The audience is transported. Songs swell. Vocalists clasp their hands over their ears, tilt their heads back, and sing qasa'id at the tops of their lungs" (Roberts and Roberts 2003:83).

An imam officiates the ceremony. Holding the baby close, he whispers the *adhan* and *lihan* in the baby's ears. The child's father tells the priest the chosen name for the baby and the priest whispers the name in the baby's ear and then spits lightly. He prays for the child's health and long life and recites a number of Qur'anic verses. Then he reveals the name to all present. A family géwël repeats the name, usually with some bravado and praising of the lineage. The guests take turns holding the baby and praying personal prayers of good wishes. Afterwards, the priest takes a moment to minister to the men on a subject from the Qur'an which is relevant to the congregation, again accentuating the religious character of the ritual. After the naming rite is completed, the men mingle outdoors as the women serve bowls of 'lah to all the guests, demonstrating the family's *kersa* (honor) and *terranga* (generosity).

Later that day or the following day, the family with the help of an ethnic or regional association, hosts the ndowtel, the party to celebrate the naming of the baby. In contrast to the ngente, this event is decidedly geared towards the women. With a spotlight on fashion, hair, jewelry, and conspicuous consumption, the ndowtel plays like a red carpet event. In both urban and rural Senegal, it has become a grand affair, teeming with upwards of 200 guests from both sides of the extended family in addition to friends, association members, and townspeople. A village compound will be converted into a contained party unit with different activities going on in various indoor and outdoor sections. Music and dancing are the main focus, although a beehive of activity among different age-mates can reveal various family dramas and conflicts over traditional customs, gift giving, and reciprocity (see Buggenhagen 2003).

At the heart of the ndowtel (literally, "cash contribution") lies a complex system of gift exchange unique to Wolof women. Giving is a gendered activity among Wolof men and women. Wolof men's giving is generally discreet, modest in amount, and intended to defray the cost of the ritual event. Women's giving, however, is entangled in a complex and controversial system of debt and collection. At family ceremonies donation amounts are systematically and secretly recorded in a way that baffles and intimidates men. The system operates thusly – a mother at a baptism is expected to re-double cash offerings given by her guests at each of her peer's subsequent celebrations. For example, if a female guest gives the mother 5.000 F CFA at her ndowtel, then when that guest has a ndowtel of her own later, the mother of the first baptism will be expected to give her friend 10.000 F CFA, twice the amount of the original gift, comprised of 5.000 F CFA to repay the initial "debt" plus 5.000 F CFA as a gift. The next time the mother has an ndowtel for another baby, the guest would give her 20.000 F CFA, twice again the amount of the last offering, including 10.000 F CFA for the initial debt plus 10.000 F CFA as a gift. Islamic and political leaders in Senegal condemn the practice as squandering (*gaspillage*) and have tried in vain to outlaw it, claiming that the extravagant donations should rather be given to the *cheikh* (Buggenhagen 2003).

Géwël punctuate and enliven the activities of the baptism by singing piercing, melismatic praise songs to family members, telling stories about the family's history and lineage, humoring people with jokes, while géwël who are music professionals fill the outdoor space with a battery of drummed dialogues. Beyond their core role as entertainers, géwël also represent and speak for the family, making announcements and repeating

whatever family members say to the massive crowd. In addition, géwël are "the principal organizers of social events for their patrons' families. They make sure the food is prepared, that the proper people are notified, and that the entertainment is adequate" (Hill 2003). At some point in the ndowtel, a troupe of professional géwël drummers sets up in the compound and performs sabar (literally, "drum") for female guests to dance. The drummers of the sabar ensemble beat out deep, interlocking rhythms on a family of four to six primary drums, using a one-stick and one-hand technique. The drums themselves are wooden, slightly barrel-shaped or goblet shaped with goat-skin heads strung externally with wooden pegs which stick straight out from the body of the drums. The family of drums includes the lead sabar, *nder*, a slender, taller, high-pitched drum which plays intricate phrases of dialogue that coordinate with dancers' movements; the *mbëng-mbëng*, a shorter goblet-shaped sabar which plays mid-range accompaniment patterns; the *gorong talmbat*, a short, wider drum with a closed end which plays simple repetitive bass rhythms; the *lamb*, another bass accompaniment sabar which is narrower than the talmbat; the *xiin*, a short, stout support drum; and the *gorong babas*, a lead drum shorter than the nder, recently introduced into the sabar ensemble by master drummer Doudou Ndiaye Rose. The two most popular traditional rhythmic genres in the sabar repertoire are *mbalax* and *ceebujen* ("fish and rice"). When the ensemble breaks into one of these intricate and forceful rhythms, women quickly form a large circle and sway from side to side, often clapping straight pulse beats, as one person at a time skips into the center of the circle to skillfully demonstrate her rendition of the dance. Each dancer's moment in the spotlight is like a mini explosion, a flash of arms and legs extending the width of a *grand boubou* (long, expansive dress) out and up, and then ending as soon as it began, as she

skips back to the outer circle to join the other dancers. As the heat rises in the rhythms, dances become more and more risqué, particularly among young géwël women, who dare to yank their garments up enough to expose their undergarment or skin underneath. Géer women dance together with géwël at family ceremonies, because it is considered suitable for women to express themselves freely in dance at ceremonies that take place at the domestic compound, although géwël have more freedom to dance suggestively or sexually (see Heath 1994). Dancing at naming ceremonies is traditionally a women's domain, although according to Senegalese, this is changing. At a family ceremonies today, you will often see young men joining women in dancing.

In addition to praise songs and sabar drumming by géwël, guests are entertained by a DJ hired to play mbalax music over a sound system, which is often powered by a gas generator in the village. Although essentially a Wolof genre, mbalax mediates a Senegalese cultural identity for many diverse groups (Truher 1997). Developed and popularized by Youssou N'dour and his bands, Etoile de Dakar and Le Super Etoile, mbalax blends elements of sabar rhythms, tama drum dialogues, and the oral poetry of géwël with western popular instrumentation. The genre developed in the late 1970s within a milieu of Latin dance bands playing in Dakar nightclubs when N'dour, at sixteen years old, formed Etoile de Dakar and blended a live sabar ensemble with the extant horn section, electric guitar, bass, and percussion of the popular Latin bands. His band also featured Assane Thiam, a géwël tama drummer, who punctuated the music with traditional Wolof proverbs designed to guide the dancers' movements. N'dour named the musical style "mbalax" after one of the prominent rhythms of the sabar ensemble, stating that it is "the rhythm of the griots" and "the rhythm

that Wolof love and feel the most" (Duran 1989:277). Vocally, N'dour incorporates the singing style and poetics of géwël performance into mbalax, including a complex rhythmic phrasing common to praise poetry, a tendency to elongate or accelerate rhythmic phrases, a timbral range between tensely nasal and coarse, periodic vocal bursts, and sudden shifts to a high pitch and volume.

Although N'dour incorporates the poetry and vocal techniques of the géwël art into his music, his own caste identity remains ambiguous. N'dour's father is géer, while his mother is géwël, which in Senegalese society is an unlikely pairing and following the Wolof patrilineal system, would identify N'dour as géer. "That blend is the key to who I am," N'dour has said (McNair 2004:1). The Senegalese social caste structure limits music professionalism to persons born into the géwël lineage and frowns upon géer pursuing music as a profession. N'dour, along with other non-griot singers Baaba Maal, Omar Pène, and Ismaël Lo, has reached international stardom in spite of the cultural expectations which limit the roles of géer and géwël. N'dour is, however, a practicing Mouride and has written and recorded numerous praise songs to Mouride saint Cheikh Amadou Bamba and Baye Fall founder Cheikh Ibra Fall. His latest album, *Sant Allah* (Thanks to Allah), is completely devoted to songs honoring Senegal's sufi brotherhoods, with the majority of songs praising the Mouride and Baye Fall founders. The songs on Sant Allah represent a nexus of religious and musical history through a collaboration between Le Super Etoile and Egyptian composer and arranger Fathy Salama and his Arabic orchestra. Recorded in 1999 in Cairo and Dakar, the album was intended as a personal exploration of faith and an hommage to diversity in religious practices. But when the events of September 11, 2001 coincided with its release date, N'dour delayed

the release. Now in 2004, the album has been released, but in an attempt to soften the overtly Islamic tones, it was released under the name *Egypt* in the western market.

Youssou N'Dour *Sant Allah (Egypt)* track list[10]

1. Allah
2. Shukran Bamba
3. Mahdiyu Laye
4. Tijaniyya
5. Baay Niasse
6. Bamba Le Poete
7. Cheikh Ibra Fall
8. Touba Darou Salam

Naming Ceremonies in Ghana

We move now to Ghana, where the naming ceremony is also performed in two distinct segments, beginning with the religious naming rite at dawn a week after a baby's birth, followed by the traditional celebration in the evening or the next day. While naming ceremonies in Ghana differ slightly among ethnic groups, they share the same basic principles and aims. The purpose is to reveal the baby's name for the first time, to instruct the baby about expected codes of ethics and behavior in society, and to introduce the baby to the community. The Asante naming ceremony, *abadintoø* (a child's naming) or *dintoø* (naming), takes place at the family's home at dawn seven days after a baby's birth. To open the ceremony, an elder of the family pours a libation of local gin (*akpeteshi*) or Schnapps on the

[10] Youssou N'dour, 2004, *Sant Allah* (*Egypt*), Jololi/Nonesuch.

doorstep to summon ancestral spirits. After chanting an invocation to the ancestors asking for their participation and blessings during the ceremony, he dribbles three drops of liquor on the ground. He repeats the action several times, chanting a phrase of the invocation and dripping three drops. Below is an example of a prayer spoken while pouring libations at a naming ceremony in Ghana.

> Father and divinity *Bosomtwi* drink.
> My child Kwadwo Anson has begotten a son,
> And has brought him to me.
> And I now call him after me.
> Naming him Kwadwo Ofori.
> Grant that he grows up
> And continue to meet me here
> Let him get money and give me food.[11]

After libations are poured, the birthmother brings out the baby and hands it to a male elder, who according to matrilineal lineage is usually a grandfather (*abusuapanin*) or maternal uncle (*wøfa*), specially chosen for his reputable character, who may also serve as the child's namesake. This elder formally requests the name of the child from the father and then tells the baby his or her name along with its meaning. He then reveals the name to those in attendance. Ghanaians place deep spiritual and social significance on choosing names, believing that a name itself will influence the moral and social behavior of a child, which in turn reflects on the family. Akan children are first named after the day of the week they are

born, according to a system of gendered day names (see Chart of Day Names in Akan). Secondly, they are often named after the order of birth (see Chart of Birth Order Names in Akan) which follows the day name. For example, the name Adwoa Mensa signifies a girl born on Monday and born third among her siblings. A child may also be named after a member of the father's family or a friend of high moral standing, with the belief that the baby will emulate his or her namesake. He or she may be given a Christian name such as Matthew or Mary, a name that reflects a good quality such as Patience, or one that reflects the parents' sentiments over the child's birth such as NyamekyE ("Gift from God").

Day of the Week	**Female**	**Male**
Sunday / Kwasiada	Akosua	(A)Kwasi
Monday / (E)Dwoada	Adwoa	Kwadwo
Tuesday / (E)Benada	Abenaa	Kwabena
Wednesday / Wukuada	Akua	Kwaku
Thursday / Yawoada	Yaw	Yaa
Friday / (E)Fiada	Afua/Afia	Kofi
Saturday / Memeneda	Amma	Kwame

[11] Invocation spoken during libations at an Asante naming ceremony in 1982 at Abetifi, Ghana cited in Anti 1987.

Birth Order	Name
First born	Piesie
Second born	Maanu (F) Manu (M)
Third born	Mansa (F) Mensa (M)
Fourth born	Anane
Fifth born	Num
Sixth born	Nsîã
Seventh born	Nsonwaa
Eighth born	(not in use)
Ninth born	Nkroma
Tenth born	Badu
Eleventh born	Kudõ
Twelfth born	Dunu

After the name is announced, the elder performs a customary rite to instruct the baby on how to behave properly in Akan society. Cradling the baby, the elder puts three drops of water on its tongue and says, "If it is water, say water" and then dots three drops of gin on its tongue and says, "If it is liquor, say liquor." Though the incantation may vary (another version is, "Let your yes be yes and your no be no") the meaning is constant - it advises the child to know the difference between right and wrong, symbolized by sweet (water) and bitter (liquor). The gin also symbolizes honesty and loyalty to the family and community, given gin's association with ancestor spirits. Similar customary rites are performed by Fante (abadinto), Ewe (*vihehedego*), and Ga (*kpodziemo*).

At the Ga kpodziemo, a female elder brings out the baby and hands it to a male elder of high moral standing, who pours two libations. First he pours cornwine at every doorstep of

the house and the main entrance and then pours gin or Schnapps to summon the ancestors for their protection of the baby and the participants of the ceremony. The baby is hoisted towards the sky three times to ask God's blessings for the infant and the family, and placed on the ground three times to introduce it to its home. Next, water is tossed on the roof and allowed to trickle onto the baby's head to teach it the difference between rain and earth, however, today, in place of water on the roof, water is sprinkled lightly on the baby's head.

The Ga ceremony is structured around a series of chants which are performed by the elder namesake of the baby. Each major segment of the rite is accompanied by a special chant, which proceed in this order: the ritual cleaning of the house, the pouring of libations and blessings on the child, presentation of drinks to the elders, the announcement of the child's name, giving of gifts, and giving of advice. The chant accompanying the libations and blessings on the child is as follows. Note that after each phrase, those in attendance respond by saying, "Yao!" (Yes).

Tsua Tsua Tsua manye aba. Tsua Tsua Tsua manye aba. Tsua Tsua Tsua manye aba.
Osoro Ahatiri, Obu Ahatiri, Oboro dutu wokpe,
Wodsebu wodse nu,
Wo ye wo nu wo kodsii adso wo,
Gboni bale etse yi ana wala,
Enye yi ana wala, Esee tuu, Ehee fann,
Eyi aba gbodsen,
Ese aba halaann,
Wekumei wona faa ni wo fa le,
Eba twu eha wo ni woye,
Eko atasi ni eko aba,

Ganyo humile koyo tsua dani owiewo,
Tsua Tsua Tsua manye aba.

Oyez! May the Gods pour their blessings upon us! Oyez! May the Gods pour their blessings upon us! Oyez! May the Gods pour their blessings upon us!
A child has been born; we have formed a circle round to view it.
Whenever we dig may it become a well full of water; and when we drink out of the means of health and strength to us!
May the parents of this child live long!
May it never look at the place whence it came!
May it be pleased always to dwell with us!
May it have respect for the aged!
May it be obedient to elders, and do what is right and proper.
May the families always be in a good position to pay respect and regard to this child, and out of his earnings may we have something to live upon!
May it live long and others come and meet it!
As a Ga person does not speak at random, so may this child be careful of his words and speech, and speak the truth so that he may not get into trouble and palavers!
Oyez! May the Gods pour their blessing upon us![12]

Following the announcement of the name and appropriate customary rites, the family prays for the infant's health, long life, and prosperity. Women serve a light meal of traditional food or refreshments, such as cakes and sodas. A plate is put out for people to donate money, which will be used to offset the expense of the ceremony or kept in a bank account for the child. A family member records the donations in a book and later will send thank you cards.

[12] Invocation spoken during libations at a Ga naming ceremony cited in Ghanaweb. http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/tribes/ga_names.html.

Music is not prominent during the morning naming rite. Though some drumming and singing occur at some families' ceremonies, the mood at most remains solemn with an emphasis on chanting and prayers. At the Ga kpodziemo for example, the systematic chanting at each segment of the ceremony along with prayers are the key genres of performance. Drumming, singing, and dancing occur only after the baby is brought outdoors to the celebration that follows the naming rite. At the Asante abadinto (naming rite), following the announcement of the baby's name, many families bring in a troupe of drummers and singers to perform the traditional genre of *adowa* songs accompanied by the adowa ensemble of drums, which include the *petia*, a small barrel-shaped drum with a goat skin attached by wooden tuning pegs; *apentemma,* similar to the petia but with a rounder body and small pedestal; *donno*, a small hourglass tension drum; and *adawura*, an iron banana-shaped bell, and often the *atumpan*, a pair of large pedestal drums which produce drum language. The adowa songs praise the mother's side of the family, call the names of the parents, their ancestors, family line, and clan. The songs always start with an invocation to God by exclaiming interchangeable names for the Supreme Being, "Øtwebiampon, Nyakropon." Some families choose to play personal tapes of CDs of gospel highlife or traditional religious songs that have a moral message about proper behavior for raising a child and maintaining a healthy marriage. Thus, music during the naming rite serves a dual role to uplift and praise the lineage while also instructing the parents about appropriate social behavior.

In addition to or in lieu of the early morning naming rite in the home, Ghanaian Christians often perform a baby dedication or baptism (*asubø* in Akan) in the church. The

baby dedication differs from Protestant and Catholic baptisms, which involve water as a sign of initiation into the religious faith. The baby dedication is rather an appropriation of the traditional naming rite into a Christian context and does not involve water sprinkling or immersion. (That water-immersion baptism usually takes place later in life among Ghanaian Protestants). Situated towards the end of a regular Sunday church service, the baby dedication is officiated by the pastor, who publicizes the baby's name to the congregation, prays for the infant's health, long life, and prosperity, and requests a special offering of money to benefit the baby. In the Pentecostal church, the pastor also dots olive oil on the baby's head to consecrate the child in the Holy Spirit. Christians have also transformed the meaning of the baby dedication into a Christian context, using scriptural evidence. According to Pastor Vincent Akosah, the baby dedication is rooted in the Law of Moses, which advocates that on the eighth day of a child's birth, parents must take the baby to the house of God to be dedicated (1 April 2003, personal communication). Ghanaian Christians have creatively syncretized traditional and religious practices into a new form.

This creative syncretization also extends to music and dance among Ghanaian Christians. The explosive spread of Christianity in Ghanaian towns and villages during the twentieth century severely threatened the practice of traditional music and dance for worship. Mission church leaders, in an effort to convert Africans, attached western culture, medicine, and education with the Biblical message in an attempt to orchestrate a complete overhaul of African social values and cultural practices. As part of this civilizing mission, missionaries prohibited traditional spiritual practices such as pouring libations, drumming, dancing, and sacrificing animals which they conflated with fetishism. After decades of contestation in the

Christian community, worshippers have managed to Africanize Christian hymns and Christianize traditional religious songs to reclaim music and dance as key vehicles for spiritual transformation.

Various ethnic groups in Ghana have blended their own traditional repertoire of music with Christian themes to make them appropriate for ceremonies held in the church. At baptisms, Ewe Christians sing traditional religious songs or Africanized Christian hymns. The latter genre consists of western hymns sung in SATB choral style in either Ewe or English, restructured to fit into an Ewe traditional six-over-four rhythmic structure played by the Ewe family of drums, which are short barrel-shaped log drums with metal bands across their bodies and goat-skin heads attached by slender wooden pegs, played with a one-stick and one-hand technique. The ensemble consists of the *atsimevu*, extremely large, slender lead drum; the *sogo*, medium-sized second lead drum; the *kidi*, smaller supporting drum; the *kaganu*, smallest supporting drum; the *gangokui*, iron double bell; and *axatse*, calabash rattle.

At the Akan asubø (baptism) in the church, one will likely hear *nnwonkoro*, a genre of women's singing accompanied by the adowa ensemble of drums. Nnwonkoro is "a hybrid musical form, incorporating songs and dance movements based on traditional practices alongside others reflecting Christian influence" (Ampene 2004). The nnwonkoro group consists of a lead singer and chorus, a drumming ensemble, and dancers. A performance begins with the female lead singer lining out a free rhythm song in declamatory style while the chorus hums "Hmmm" at the end of each long phrase. The second section begins with a bell player playing a timeline pattern for the other drummers to enter, which sets the tempo and rhythm for another series of songs intended for dancing.

In addition to nnwonkoro songs, a live band may also perform lively gospel highlife tunes, such as "Aseda yE Ønyame," which inspire dancing from the congregation.

Aseda yE Ønyame dea.
Aseda yE Ønyame dea.
Mentumi nka adeE a wa yE ama me?
Momo adeE a wa yE ama me.
Momo adeE a wa yE ama me.
Mentumi nka adeE a wayE ama me.

We give thanks to God.
We give thanks to God.
I can't explain what He has done for me.
Thanks, thanks, for what you have done for me.
Thanks, thanks, for what you have done for me.
I can't explain what He has done for me.

Following the morning naming rite, whether in the home or in church, Ghanaian families host an outdooring to formally introduce the baby to the community. Sponsored by an ethnic or regional association, the outdooring is a widely publicized and heavily attended social event. Like the Wolof ndowtel, the outdooring features music and dance, feasting, socializing, and gift giving. The celebration is called an "outdooring" because it marks the first time a baby is taken out of doors, after a week's seclusion with the birthmother. For the first week of its life, an infant is regarded as a stranger or visitor (*ohoho* in Akan, *amedzro* in Ewe) because of its susceptibility to the dangers that threaten to take the child back into the

spirit realm. The term "outdooring" has been extended to other lifecycle ceremonies in Ghanaian society that involve the transition of an individual to a new stage of life and a new status in the family and community. For example, in the Ga *dipo* puberty rite the female initiates are given an outdooring after receiving puberty initiation and instruction. The term outdooring is also applied to public ceremonies that introduce a new public figure, such as a chief or a new business, enterprise, or association.

An outdooring features traditional drumming and dancing by local troupes (Attah-Poku 1996), the style of which depends on the ethnic group. At the Ga outdooring (kpodziemo, literally "bringing the child out"), a local drumming troupe plays Ga recreational rhythms such as *kpanlogo*, *kolomashie*, or Ga adowa and encourages participation of the guests to dance, clap, and sing along. A kpanlogo group consists of a leader singer and chorus singing repetitive call and response songs, accompanied by an ensemble of two or more drummers who also sing as they play kpanlogo drums, which are barrel-shaped with goat skin or antelope skin attached by wooden tuning pegs. An iron bell, calabash rattle, and hand claps set up the timeline over which the interlocking drum rhythms are layered. Anlo-Ewe have their own brand of kpanlogo which they perform at family ceremonies called *borborbor*, an energetic mix of traditional drum rhythms, proverbial language, and social or Christian lyrics, punctuated by a military bugle. Borborbor is the most popular recreational style of music in the Volta Region and demands participation of all present through circle dancing and singing in call and response form.

The outdooring would be incomplete without dancing to popular highlife music provided by a DJ, live band, or a family's own CDs and cassette tapes. Highlife music has

been a channel for creating and expressing a national Ghanaian identity since the early years of independence when first president Kwame Nkrumah incorporated highlife into nationalist projects. John Collins traces the history of Ghanaian dance music to three distinct streams. "First there was the imported influences of foreign sailors that became 'palm-wine' highlife; second, that of the colonial brass-bands that became *adaha* highlife; and third, that of the christianised [sic] black élite which became dance-band highlife" (Collins 1989:222).

The early roots of highlife are set in the late nineteenth century along the coast of West Africa in Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and Liberia, when local musicians combined the music of their drums and stringed instruments with those of white and African American sailors stationed along the coastline. This blending of local African rhythms and instruments, especially the *gombey* frame drum and "clips" (castanets), with western instruments such as the acoustic guitar, accordion, mandolin, and banjo developed into palm-wine music, so-called for the wine tapped from palm trees which was readily available along the docks. An important innovation around this time came from Kru sailors from Liberia working aboard foreign ships who are known to have adapted the local two-finger plucking style of African lutes and harps to the guitar which became a signature sound of palm-wine guitar. By the late 1920s and early 1930s, Ghanaians were recording palm-wine music in small groups of two guitarist/vocalists and one percussionist/vocalist such as the landmark group, Kumasi Trio also known as Sam's Trio after the group's leader, Kwame "Sam" Asare. By the 1950s, guitar bands were extremely popular and were recorded regularly by Decca and HMV (His Master's Voice).

The second stream, brass band highlife, was created when military brass and fife bands of the European forts stationed along the West African coast were Africanized by local troops. This transformation was influenced by the introduction of West Indian troops to the west coast of Africa, who had adapted their own calypso and mento styles to the brass instruments for recreation. After witnessing this, Ghanaian military men infused their bands with African rhythms and melodic riffs and created adaha. According to Collins, "a 'poor-man's' version of the *adaha* called *'konkoma'* or *'konkomba'* became a craze between the 1920s and 1940s" which eventually influenced Nigerian jùjú music as well as the Ewe recreational style, borborbor (1989:224).

The third stream, dance-band highlife, derives from orchestras who played European, American, and Latin dance genres for the colonial community and African elite at a time between the two World Wars. In the beginning, these orchestras, including the Jazz Kings and Cape Coast Sugar Babies, played a straight repertoire of ballroom music such as waltz, polka, ragtime, rumba, tango, and samba. But in the 1920s, orchestras began filling out their sets with the occasional gombey, ashiko, or palm-wine song. As less fortunate Ghanaians gathered in the streets outside the high-class venues, they reveled in the sounds of their local music performed by the sophisticated orchestras, and hence, the style of orchestrated palm-wine music was deemed as "highlife." In the 1940s, the orchestras were reduced to smaller dance bands that mirrored British and American groups stationed in the region. E.T. Mensah, regarded as the King of Highlife, effectively synthesized swing music and Caribbean rumba and calypso with traditional African rhythms and lyrical themes in local languages to produce the epitome of Ghanaian popular music. During a tour of Nigeria in the 1950s, his music

inspired Nigerian Yoruba and Igbo musicians to create their own brand of highlife music, which survives today through Chief Stephen Osita Osadebe, Victor Olaiya, and others.

In the mid- to late-1970s, bands began blending the sounds, arrangements, and styles of guitar-band and dance-band highlife to create something both rootsy and modern. Guitar bands adopted small horn sections but kept the signature guitar-picking styles and traditional drum rhythms, such as sikyi highlife developed by K. Gyasi and his guitarist, Eric Agyeman. Another innovation in the 1970s involved musicians stationed in Hamburg, Germany who flooded the genre with synthesizers and electronic percussion that was dubbed burgher highlife. Also in the 1970s, independent Christian churches greatly influenced the expansion of gospel highlife by incorporating highlife music in their worship services and by offering musicians opportunities to perform and record in an otherwise economically challenged environment (Collins 2002). New gospel highlife groups emerged *en masse* in the 1980s, including Mary Ghansah, Daughters of Glorious Jesus, Reverend Yaw Agyeman Baidoo, and Stella Dugan. The latter two genres, burgher highlife and gospel highlife, are still enormously popular in Ghana. The most recent incarnation of highlife involves yet another hybridization, that of American hip hop and highlife, known as hiplife. With urban youth rapping over sampled highlife melodies and drumbeats, hiplife is a highly contested musical practice. Many in the entertainment industry warn that it will mean the downfall and ruin of Ghanaian popular music, while others revel in its ingenuity.

The dance style for highlife is a study in composure and grace. The posture and relaxed yet controlled movements reflect highlife's roots as a colonial ballroom style which was steadily Africanized. Based on a ground of two alternating steps or a step-together, step-

together motion, dancers bend slightly forward at the waist and sway gently at the hips with their elbows bent and fists gently clutched or hands out straight. Flourishes of intensity and dynamics are added by bending the knees and going lower or by raising the arms with the elbows bent. The two most common configurations for dancing are in couples (reflecting the western influence) or in small encircled groups with one person at a time going to the center of the circle (reflecting the African influence).

Approximately 16 percent of Ghanaians are practicing Muslims. While the Northern and Eastern Regions of Ghana are saturated with Islamic culture and history, many Muslim individuals and families have migrated to the southern half of the country during the last several decades, seeking opportunities in higher education and employment. Ghanaian Muslim families share many religious ritual practices with Senegalese Muslims, while they also share cultural practices with neighboring Ghanaian ethnic groups. Among the northern ethnic groups Dagbamba, Mamprusi, Nanumba, Hausa, Konkomba, and Chamba, the naming ceremony is performed in two segments – the religious segment held in the mosque, which includes publicizing the baby's name and praying for the child's life and health, followed by the traditional activities at the domestic compound centered on drumming, dancing, eating, and socializing in the afternoon and evening. During the week after birth, the mother and her baby are isolated and carefully attended to by female relatives, who are the only ones permitted to look at or touch the baby, to prevent evil spirits, the evil eye, and disease. A number of rites are performed for the baby's spiritual protection, some traditional and some Islamic. Traditionally, for spiritual protection and to "root" the child in its home, the placenta is buried in the back section of the domestic compound or house. Shea butter is rubbed on the child's skin to protect it from evil spirits. The baby's hair is shaved and weighed and an equal measure of

money is given to the poor. Afterwards, the hair is buried. Islamically, the call to prayer is whispered to the baby immediately after birth and special prayers are said for the protection of the child (shaving the hair and giving money to the poor may also have an Islamic component).

The day before the naming festivities among Ghanaian Muslims, young boys are sent to the neighboring villages with kola nuts to invite the elders and their families to the ceremony. That night, a drummer walks around the village, drumming the announcement that a naming ceremony will take place the next day. On the day of the ceremony, music continues to frame and articulate the various events through the use of talking drums as speech surrogates together with praise singing. Drumming starts in the morning at the house or village compound before people have gone to the mosque, announcing that a naming ceremony is taking place. The Dagbamba talking drums are the *lunga*, an hourglass tension drum; and the *gungon*, a large double-headed cylindrical drum with a snare string across each head. Each neighboring ethnic group has a comparable ensemble of talking drums which varies in dialect for instance, the Chamba tension drum is called *longa* and the cylindrical bass drum is *digongo*. The drummers who specialize in the repertoire of praise drumming and singing belong to a social class of professional historians and musicians, which falls under that general concept of griot. "In Dagbon the drummers, *Lunsi*, are the court historians and musicians, chroniclers of the past and recorders of the present" (Oppong 1973:54 qtd. in Neeley and Seidu 1995:1). The drumming at naming ceremonies consists of an artful display of proverbial praise songs geared towards the family, the tribe, and the clan. In the morning, a group of several drummers sets up in the compound or yard and beats out praise songs for a while before the majority of the family goes to the mosque for prayers and the publicizing of

the child's name. While the naming takes place at the mosque, there is a constant flurry of activity at the house – women are cooking, men are slaughtering a sheep and preparing to distribute the various cuts of meat, and boys are setting up a tented tarp area for the dancing. The entire preparation is a family affair. After the mosque ceremonies are complete, the family and friends return to the compound to eat, socialize and dance to the traditional drumming and singing. Drummers target family members by beating out proverbial chants that praise the heroics of the family, while the subject of the praise graciously reciprocates by pasting bills on the musician's forehead. Guests also contribute donations for the baby, by discreetly dropping money into a calabash bowl at the center of the room. People bring gifts to mother as well, helping her out with provisions such as baby clothes, soap, shea butter, powder, yam, cassava, and cash.

Ethnicity, Kinship, and Identity

Jonathan Friedman describes two main conditions for establishing and maintaining cultural identity. "Certain kinds of identity are marked on or carried by the body. They are defined as internal to the person. Others are external to the person and marked in the forms of social practice or symbols employed by a population (Friedman 1994:29)." He suggests that cultural identity "carried by the individual, in the blood" is commonly conceptualized as race or biological descent on one extreme and heritage or cultural descent on the other (30). The latter represents the general western concept of ethnicity. He contrasts this notion of ethnicity with what he calls "traditional ethnicity" in kinship-based societies. "In kinship-based societies, the network of kin connections is simultaneously a network of distinctive spiritual

forces that form in specific combination the person who is, in this sense, a locus of cosmological activity rather than a center of self-definition (ibid.)." Personal identity in this paradigm is determined by social context and can be changed by geographic mobility.

That this paradigm is perfectly suitable for investigating African immigrant rituals in a diasporic setting is not lost on Friedman, as much of his research focuses on Congolese immigrants in Paris. My aim is to apply these concepts of the cosmologically-related self, kinship-determined identification, and geographic mobility to the ritual setting of family ceremonies in the immigrant diaspora. What qualities of identity are Ghanaian and Senegalese immigrants reinforcing or reconfiguring during naming ceremonies? For immigrants, extant considerations towards the making of the African subject such as ethnicity, age group, gender, and kinship obligations are confronted with new considerations that mark them as "Other" such as race, class, and alien status. It will become clear in the following ethnographic section some of the particular ways in which African immigrants strategize during lifecycle ceremonies to both modernize and negotiate traditional performance practices to create new modes of identification in the diasporic setting.

A Senegalese (Wolof) Baye Fall Naming Ceremony in Los Angeles

A small number of Senegalese in Los Angeles belong to a mystical sub-group of Mouridism called the Baye Fall. In March of 2003, a Baye Fall husband and wife hosted a naming ceremony for their newborn son in Los Angeles. The baby has been named after the founder of the Baye Fall faith, Cheikh Ibrahima Fall. I received a videotape of the naming ceremony from the videographer, Ismaila Baby, and have drawn up a description from my

interview with him while we viewed the tape together. Videotapes of lifecycle events have become valuable mediators of transnational identity for African immigrants in the United States and Europe. The images recorded in the Diaspora circulate to other immigrant locales globally and back to Africa. Ismaila Baby has been documenting Senegalese immigrant ceremonies in L.A. for about three years. He has developed a personal style of filming and editing, which in some ways can be attributed to his living in Los Angeles and in other ways reflects a West African style of music video production. His choices of content, special effects, and editing accentuate aspects that are of value to Senegalese immigrants. Dance styles and fashion emerge as primary themes through his montages of close-ups of women's dresses, hair styles, earrings, necklaces, and shoes, along with close-ups of women's derrieres while dancing and extended footage of women dancing together in tight circles.

The video opens with a map of Senegal, which breaks up into spinning squares and dissolves into a sign of the apartment building in the mid-Wilshire area. This opening establishes the dual locality of the naming ceremony with its connection to the Motherland. The video cuts to a painting of Cheikh Ibrahima Fall, the founder and saint of the Baye Fall faith, with an insert of the baby dressed in a white christening gown and white blanket. Outside the apartment, male guests arrive, greet the father, and enter the building. Some wear light blue or grey boubous, but most of the men are dressed in western clothes such as khaki pants, jeans, or dark slacks with dress shirts, sweaters, or sports jerseys, and leather bomber jackets or jean jackets. Some of the men top off their outfits with Gucci or Burberry hats, baseball caps, or knitted caps.

The opening credits and activities of the ngente are accompanied by a recording of a qasa'id called "Jaawartou" sung by a Mouride student group, Hizbut Tarqiyya from Universite Cheikh Anta Diop in Senegal. Qasa'id are recitations of the oral poetry of Cheikh Amadou Bamba. By performing or listening to qasa'id, Mourides practice remembering Bamba and trace their travel and return to him. This particular qasa'id, "Jaawartou," "is felt to possess so strong a blessing (baraka) that it is considered to be a 'Passport to Paradise' (Roberts and Roberts 2003:24). It is recognized for its purity of rhyme and sentiment, opening with the couplet:

Jaawartou bil – fourqani rabbiyal – Mouhine.
Malaktou nafsiya wa zahzahtoul – Lahine.

Thanks to the Qur'an, I have been able to approach my Lord.
I have mastered my soul, and I have distanced the cursed one (Satan).

Inside the apartment, the men are seated and waiting quietly for the ngente to begin. The sofas and chairs have been pushed against the walls, providing additional seating on large Persian rugs on the floor. The women are a few feet away in the kitchen, preparing the breakfast of 'lah to serve after the naming rite. On one couch sits the imam, dressed in a light blue boubou and cap. Next to him sits the representative of the Mouride community in Los Angeles wearing a white boubou and black wool cap, and next to him, the baby's father. The birthmother's géwël, who represents the mother during the ceremony, hands the child to the Mouride leader, who cradles the baby in front of him. He passes the infant to the imam, who

bends forward to pray and blows the prayer toward the baby. The imam quietly announces the baby's name to the crowd. Passing the child around the room, each man in turn holds the baby, whispers a blessing and softly spits it toward the infant. Senegalese Muslims believe that there is visceral power in the words of a prayer which are physically transferred onto another by blowing or spitting the prayer onto another or onto one's self by wiping one's open palms onto one's face after praying. The mood in the room is still and solemn. After the baby is passed around, the imam prays aloud and the others respond to each phrase with "Mmm." The men pray, touching their hands together, palms up, and then wipe the prayer onto their faces.

For the next few moments, the imam ministers to the crowd about the Qur'an. He speaks in Wolof about the duty of *zakah*, the annual donation of alms, while the men listen intently. Muslims are bound to five essential duties according to the Qur'an. These include reciting Shahada, praying five times a day, fasting, making the pilgrimage to Mecca, and performing zakah. The roomful of men pray with their hands in front of them, palms facing up. At the prayer's end they rub their hands on the tops of their heads and down their faces, transferring the prayer onto their person. Meanwhile, the women serve bowls of 'lah to the seated men. As the men eat, the mood changes from very serious and quiet to a bit lighter as they begin to talk and laugh. The morning naming ceremony comes to an end.

Later that day, the women prepare for the ndowtel by having their hair professionally styled and dressing up in extravagant Senegalese dresses, gold jewelry, and thick glittering make-up. To mark the grandeur of their entrance, the video presents in dramatic slow motion the new mother and her female attendants floating through the apartment building and into

the reception hall. Their procession is accompanied by a recording of *xalam* (a Wolof plucked lute) by Samba Diabari Samba, perhaps the most revered géwël of Senegal and the only remaining xalam player from the *Association des Grands Griots.* The song describes a *lingéer,* a beautiful woman who is rich like a queen. For the women, a naming ceremony is a time to dress to impress. Not only do physical beauty, adornment, and style reflect a woman's *sanse*, or "sense of dressing well" (Heath 1990:19; cf. N'G. Fall et al. 1998; Mustafa 2001a, 2001b, 1997; and Catherine N'Diaye 1984:34-35 cited in McNee 2000:5 cited in Roberts and Roberts 2003:151), they also communicate a woman's feminine grace, which is a crucial component for garnering baraka. In addition, the women are mindful that the celebration is being recorded in pictures and videotape and anticipate that the images will travel, giving an impression of how the immigrants are faring in Los Angeles. In fact, videotapes of family ceremonies performed in L.A. and other major diasporic sites such as New York, are valuable cultural commodities for African immigrants and their families because they represent a real increase in status.

Once inside the hall, a group of ladies surround and dance around Khadija[13] to welcome her to the party. The women are decked out in boubous, *abaya* (lace dress), and *ndocket* (top and skirt) in a variety of colors – black, brown, gold, white, peach, light blue, orange, and lavender – with sizable gold earrings, necklaces, and bracelets. Khadija wears a green satin dress with a sheer green overlay dotted with small bunches of leaves and flowers. She will change outfits twice more during the ceremony. The women quickly form a circle around the guest of honor and dance around her to the recorded mbalax music. One lady joins

the new mother in the center of the circle and dances closely with her for a moment and then returns to the outer circle. There is a mood of intimacy and relaxed glee among the woman as they smile, laugh, and dance closely together. While the women dance, the men sit off to the side, eating and discussing matters of their own interest. Moving the circle out to the dance floor area, the women take turns going to the center of the small circle, then two or three at a time, showing off their virtuosic dance moves for one another, and then retreating to the outer circle. As they sway from side to side, some of the ladies clutch the edge of their upper garments with one hand and work it back and forth with an extended arm movement. Their gestures are broad, sweeping, and controlled. They exhibit a keen independence of arms, legs, torso, and hips. Other ladies in the outer circle clap to the downbeat of the mbalax, creating a pulse for the solo dancers in the center to improvise. The use of space on the dance floor is based on creating a circle of swaying bodies, with short spurts of virtuosity in the inner circle and then a quick retreat to the outer circle.

Each new song that comes on has a dance style that goes with it and the women impress one another with their mastery of the dance movements. In Senegal, every new hit song is accompanied by its own dance style that gets its name from a particular gesture or proverbial saying communicated by the dance movements. New dances go in and out of fashion as quickly as dress styles in Dakar and surrounding areas, and there is substantial pressure to learn and master each new dance. But immigrants, cut off from the constant influx of new dance styles, can get behind in their mastery of new dances. This is why visitors from Senegal say they can tell how long a Senegalese has lived in America by the

[13] I have fictionalized the name of the birthmother, but have kept the baby's real name because of the

way he or she dances. New arrivals often critique and ridicule immigrants who are behind on dance styles, but quickly educate them on the newest movements during public dance events, such as Independence Day celebrations or association parties.

Throughout the ceremony, dancing remains the number one activity among the women. Eventually, their dance movements take on a quality of sexual parody and flirtatious play. It has been argued that Wolof women's dancing at family ceremonies allows women to negotiate the boundaries of gender, sexuality, and power. "The struggle over the meaning of dance has to do with shifting notions of appropriateness, grounded in relations of power" (Heath 1994:90). The predominant notion of appropriateness is based on "the bodily and verbal expression of sexuality and Wolof norms of conduct rooted in the concept of *kersa* (honor), which links high status to restraint" (ibid.). From this schema of expressive norms emerge two dominant concepts. One is that women are more associated with sexuality and must be controlled or restrained and two, that there is a significant caste difference between the appropriate or expected behavior of géer, who should be restrained, and géwël, who are freer to be unrestrained and suggestive while dancing. These characteristics are often used to stereotype members of the different social castes. Judith Irvine, after observing Wolof women performing in a variety of contexts, concludes that gender, age, caste, and the degree of privacy of the performance setting determine the degree of appropriateness for women to dance suggestively (1974:303 in Heath 1994:91). In the presence of men, most women used some restraint when dancing. At a public dance sponsored by political leaders, only géwël women danced suggestively while géer exercised restraint. However, in the privacy of the

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significance of his chosen name for the naming ceremony.

domestic compound where no men were present, women tended to dance freely and suggestively regardless of age group or caste. Likewise, at a women's association meeting, age and caste made no difference in dancing. And at lifecycle ceremonies such as baptisms, women of all ages and castes danced with gusto, although some expressed that it was inappropriate for a mature woman who has borne several children to dance, upholding the impression that dancing is young people's business (*afeer-u xale*).

Senegalese women tend to skirt the issue of dance and sexuality. While viewing the ndowtel video with a Senegalese college student, I tell her that it is very interesting to me as an American to see women behaving so sensually together. She replies,

> "And it's not sexual at all, obviously. Like I said, if you go to Senegal, you see guys dancing together and being relatively close and women, too. And it has nothing to do with the way women dance [sexually] at clubs here [in the U.S.]. I think it's being comfortable, and that's probably why they do it with women versus with men, because that sexual element isn't there. It's just women goofing around, having fun. I mean, you would think this is pretty close right? (laughs) But it's not even like that" (23 March 2004, personal communication).

However, she also admits that she is embarrassed to dance any Senegalese dances in the presence of her professors, given the sexualized hip movements of the dance styles. She also points out that since this event is being taped, it complicates what would be considered the standard Wolof expectations of behavior.

To illustrate the dichotomy within women's dancing and sexuality, I refer to one dancing sequence at the ndowtel which has obvious sexual connotations. A new song comes

on and one woman carries a chair out to the dance floor. Clutching the back of the chair, she bends deeply forward at the waist. The other ladies excitedly surround her in a large circle. During the rhythmic drum break in the song, the woman bumps her buttocks and hips in a precise rendering of the rhythmic pattern of the sabar drums and then runs away laughing. Another lady approaches, clutches the back of the chair, bends forward, and performs her dexterous buttock and hip rendering of the drum break pattern. Meanwhile, another woman joins her and places her hand on the small of the dancer's back, facilitating deeper movements of her backside. On the last beat of the drum phrase, the second lady thrusts her abdomen into the dancer's rear end. The ladies giddily rush off, making way for others to take their turn.

The song that instigates the chair dance is called "Songa Ma" by Mbaye Dieye Faye. Songa Ma literally means "hang on," which in the scope of the lyrics, tells a young woman how to respond to the singer's acrobatic love-making. During Faye's concerts in Senegal, he has a female dancer onstage who bends at the waist and hangs on to a pole while he sings "Songa Ma." Consequently, the dancers at the ndowtel playfully act out the sexual connotations by "hanging on" to the chair back while the song is playing. Their sexually overt dance movements at these ceremonies are consistent with Irvine's observations (1974) and Heath's analyses (1994) on women's tendency to dance suggestively at family ceremonies – particularly baptisms – that involve only women. Yet, the fact that men are present at this ritual event, not to mention that a man is videotaping the event complicates the matter and presents new questions to consider, namely what negotiations over appropriateness are taking place in the arena of dance at Senegalese immigrant family rituals?

Several children gather to one side creating their own dancing circle. This reflects a typical practice in Africa where children have their own shadow performance to the side of the adult performance area where they imitate the adults. One little girl expertly imitates the women's dancing style, touching the fingertips of one hand to her stomach and bending her knees in and out. She softly clutches her blouse with the other hand as she winds her hips in and out and around. In Senegal, children are encouraged to dance at the domestic compound and are "rewarded with laughter and attention…for well-executed suggestive movements" (Heath 1994:92). As children become adolescents, dance is marked as a gendered activity, seen more as women's business (*afeer-u jigeen*). Girls form associations and organize sabar, afternoon dances with drums, in a semi-public space between family compounds. "Sabar dances give women an opportunity to assert their autonomy by gathering together outside the bounds of household authority" (ibid.). However, sabar is seen as inappropriate for married women or marrying-age girls. But it is okay for married women to dance at weddings or naming ceremonies.

A break in the dancing segues into a brief round of speeches by the female guests. Seated in a semi-circle around the mother, the ladies pass around a microphone and express their good wishes for the mother and the baby. In Wolof, the women introduce themselves, wish the baby a long and healthy life, and express sentimental thoughts of friendship and sisterhood towards the mother. After the speeches, the géwël women gather themselves into a group and move towards the géer ladies who are now relaxing in chairs configured in a circle around the dance floor. The géwël clap straight pulse beats and chant praise songs to the

seated géer ladies, who look up and smile demurely. Standing directly in front of Khadija, they sing:

Lidibe sama mbokula
Sama nidiaye moko diur
Sama mbokula

The baby, he's my parent.
He's the son of my uncle.
He's my parent.

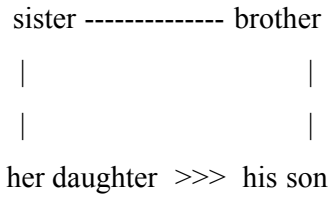
A man standing behind the birthmother pulls out a stack of twenty dollar bills and hands a couple to the lead singer, who waves the bills in the air as she strikes up another song. This exchange of song and money signifies the social dynamic between géer and géwël, which hinges on the qualities of service and information (by the géwël) and generosity and humility (by the géer). The performance and exchange articulates and regenerates the mutually dependent social relationships between persons of different social castes, or lineage groups. The term "caste" is, in fact, an unfortunate classification, and is under scrutiny by Africanist scholars (Al Roberts, personal communication) given the inherent allusions to stark social hierarchies and static boundaries of identification. However, in social practice, the roles and identities revolving around social caste are more flexible and agentive. Senegalese themselves even critque the notion of caste, and many people see the concept more as a cultural negotiation of identity and occupation, rather than a static construction (Ismaila Baby, personal communication).

Traditionally, géwël are always present at family ceremonies such as baptisms to sing praise songs, tell stories, and speak on behalf of family members. They also accomplish much of the physical work of cooking, cleaning, and decorating in exchange for payment. At Wolof immigrant ceremonies, géwël may or may not be present, given the small number of immigrants in the community and the constraints of the host society. At this particular naming ceremony, a good number of the guests are in fact, géwël. Moving around the room, the singers ascend on a group of men seated off to the side of the reception hall. Interrupting their dinner and conversations, the women sing loudly and accompany themselves by clapping straight pulse beats:

Lidibe sama mbokula
Sama nidiaye moko diur
Sama mbokula

The baby, he's my parent.
He's the son of my uncle.
He's my parent.

This song speaks to a unique set of familial relationships and obligations in Wolof society. If a woman and her brother of the same mother and father each bear a child, their respective offspring are regarded as cousins and in Wolof society are eligible to marry. Additionally, the sister's child regards the brother's child as his or her caretaker, chief, boss, or parent. To illustrate, let's say the sister bears a daughter and her brother bears a son.



Now, the daughter can say to her cousin, the son of her uncle, "You are my master, my boss" and he in turn is expected to give her money if she asks for it. This relationship is uni-directional, in that it applies only from the woman's child towards the brother's child. At a family event such as a baptism, the daughter can assume the role of a géwël by cooking and working for her cousin and then request money for her efforts or she can do nothing at all and ask him for money. Often at baptisms, a niece or nephew will cook, clean, and organize like a géwël would, even if the person is géer, so that he or she can make some extra money. In this paradigm, the niece or nephew is doing the work of a géwël but is also relying on the unique caretaker relationships between cousins. The géwël singing the song at the baptism in question are highlighting that special relationship among cousins and symbolically asserting that in fact, "Lidibe sama mbokula" or, "The baby, he's my parent," "Sama nidiaye moko diur," or, "He's the son of my uncle." And thus, the singers are in a position to request money, even though their pleas are symbolically constructed.

The géwël focus heavily on one particular Mouride trader who has been very kind and generous to Khadija since she has been in America. This man has treated her like a brother with his constant generosity and counseling. He has even paid for the making of the video. Prancing towards him, the lead géwël waves the stiff stack of bills sticking out of the top of her fist and leads the others in a new song:

Kud nijaay nerne
Amfa diamu
Amfa xalis

Uncle's house is good.
They have peace.
They have money.

Kud nijaay nerne
Amfa jabar
Amfa xalis

Uncle's house is good.
They have wife.
They have money.

This praise song is a testimonial to the state of the host's household and the family's ability to extend their good fortune to their guests. The singers express that in this house, the family has peace because they have money, food, music, wives, etc. It also means that guests who have been invited to this house will benefit from the rich state of the household by enjoying the music, dance, food, and money, which together constitute peace. Then the lead singer, standing over the seated géer ladies, strikes up another praise chant:

Dolen guere allufint
Waleu geruu allefé.

You géer are not like little géer.
You are major géer.

This song is meant to illicit more money from the ladies by way of a compliment. They are essentially saying, "While some géer are petty and refuse to give money, I know you ladies are generous and will give it up." Afterwards, the ladies engage in another long period of dancing together to mbalax. Then they shift to another round of speeches. Again, the ladies, about fifteen total, pass around the microphone and express their good wishes and remembrances about the mother. This time, the speeches are emotionally charged and evoke strong sentiments from the guest of honor and her age-mates, often bringing the women to tears. Ismaila explains the emotional power of the testimonials:

> Maybe one day you need $20 and you don't have it. You ask everybody, they say no. Maybe you're going to go to jail if you don't have that money. And you come to ask me, 'Ismaila, I have problem, I need this much money.' I say, 'No problem. I give it to you.' You say, 'No guarantee, no nothing.' I say, 'No, don't worry. You don't have to pay me back. This is free. Take it.' And that day you really need that much money. So then you keep it and you don't forget. But for me, I just do it and say, 'No problem.' But I have a baptize and then you wait and say, 'Me, I can tell Ismaila is a good person, because I am witnessing this. I'm gonna tell you this, because one day I had problem.' If you are an emotional person you can cry telling the story and people around, when they hear that sad story, they cry too. It's like when you go to the movie. Movie is not true, but some people, they cry. Because most of the time United States is very hard. It's not like Africa (personal communication 15 July 2003).

In between the speeches, a round-ish woman in a brown boubou (who I am told is the birthmother's géwël) responds at length. Still flashing the stack of $20 bills in her hand as she speaks, the géwël in brown hands most of the stack to another woman, explaining that the birthmother wishes for her to have this money in exchange for her kindness and support during the tough times in America. She then takes money from another géwël and peels off the remaining two bills from her own stack and hands them to this same woman one at a time, expressing the mother's gratitude with each bill she hands over. All the ladies applaud. Flooded with emotion, the recipient of the money rises and dances directly in front of the mother, singing that Khadija is *saf loxo*, meaning that she is generous, using a metaphor for a woman who can cook well (literally, has a tasty hand).

Then the birthmother herself responds. Fighting back tears the mother talks about how her good friend (the man who was the subject of the praise song above) has helped her and her husband so extensively and selflessly since they have been in America that it feels as if she has a brother of her own here. This interchange reveals an important shift in identity during African immigrant rituals in America. Normally at a baptism in Senegal, the mother would not speak to the guests directly. She would only be represented by her family géwël through praise songs and announcements. Here, given the relaxed traditional rules and obligations, the mother feels compelled to communicate her feelings about the man who has helped her survive in the harsh social environment. The géwël then comments that in Senegal, they would not be comporting themselves exactly in this manner, that the pressures and responses by the community have actually enhanced the bonds of sisterhood while relaxing the obligations towards caste.

Thoughts

A burgeoning scholastic interest in African out-migration has illuminated some of the effects that mass migration has had on West African economic and social climates. Earlier focus on the "brain drain," pinpointing Ghana and Nigeria, revealed that the significant number of professionals and intellectuals who moved to America and Europe in the late twentieth century has left those countries severely wanting in the professional and managerial sector. In 2002, President John Kufuor of Ghana proposed a "Homecoming" by requesting that Ghanaians abroad strongly consider coming home to provide much needed professional services. In the last decade, the scholastic focus has shifted to Senegal, another area where out-migration is affecting West African social relations not only politically and economically, but at the level of the domestic sphere (Buggenhagen 2003). This shift concerns Mouride petty traders from Senegal who have expanded their trade networks globally. Mouride migration started within the borders of Senegal, when the collapse of the groundnut economy along with the neo-liberal politics of the 1970s forced Mourides to move from their rural Sufi compounds in Touba and other towns to the urban center of Dakar. Soon, traders expanded outward to France, London, and Rome and then New York and Tokyo.

As a result, Mouride men travel and live abroad a great percentage of each year and send regular remittances home to fund their families in Senegal. According to Buggenhagen's research on the implications of Mouride migration, the impact of the absence of men and increase of outside money is also impacting the Senegalese system of domestic economy and kinship politics, which is particularly apparent during family ceremonies. Her work shows

that, in the men's absence, women have overdeveloped their own ceremonial system of gift exchange, which is based on increasing amounts of debt and credit. In addition, women have become the obvious and dominant heads of household, which is transforming Senegal's traditional domestic make-up and subsequent gender responsibilities. "Diaspora has changed [sic] nature and composition of family and social processes like marriage and naming ceremony [sic]. As an agricultural community these households depended on extended relations of kin and forging of alliances through marriage to cultivate the land. Today, these families rely on remittances from male migration abroad" (Buggenhagen 2003:260).

Next, I will examine how Ghanaian immigrants in Los Angeles perform the naming rite. This will provide more insight into some of the adaptive strategies by immigrants from different West African countries for creatively negotiating between religion and tradition and between the limitations and the advantages of the host environment to formulate new identities through ritual performance.

A Ghanaian (Asante) Christian Naming Ceremony and Outdooring in Los Angeles

For seven months in 2003, I played drumset with the gospel group, or "praise team," at a Pentecostal church comprised mostly of immigrants from Ghana, with a smaller number of immigrants from other African countries, as well as Central America, South America, and a few African Americans. Like many African immigrant churches, this congregation takes up temporary residence in a building because they cannot afford to erect their own church building. In fact, this is the fifth temporary space the church has occupied since the pastor emigrated from Ghana and founded the church in 1997. Originally meeting in people's

homes, they moved to the Marla Gibbs Center in Leimert Park. Next, they shared a building with another church, and then moved to a fourth location on Pico. The pastor learned that Della Reese, the star of the television series "Touched by an Angel," had a church in the Ionic Masonic Temple adjacent to Beverly Hills, and when she moved to a bigger space, the pastor moved his church in. Currently, the church rents out offices and the sanctuary from the Masons at the Masonic Temple. Accordingly, the interior of the sanctuary is accented with large insignia of Masonic principles. The hallway and dining hall are lined with framed photographs of celebrated elderly Jewish Masons. It leaves little doubt that the African and Latin American immigrants feel awkward and disoriented every Sunday when they come to worship. This awkwardness sometimes figures into the pastor's sermon and into people's conversations after church. To top it off, the landlords of the building have caused some financial pressure, so the church officials have been embroiled in a long process of finding a new building.

To counteract these feelings of disorientation and dislocation, the church members Africanize the space by transforming the landscape and soundscape during their performance of worship and then remove all the evidence when they are finished. Every Sunday, two men post a large banner at the back wall of the sanctuary that reads, "Christ-Citadel International Church, Pastor Vincent Akosah." Women roll in a podium for the pastor and set up a row of chairs for the church elders. Behind the chairs they place a table covered with a white lace tablecloth, a pitcher of water, glasses, a vase of faux flowers, a stack of church bulletins, and a small crystal bottle of olive oil. They bring in an overhead projector to the display the song lyrics on the back wall. The band members cart in their instruments, including two electric

keyboards, a bass amp, a drumset, three conga drums, along with a P.A. system that includes the soundboard, cassette tape recorder, speakers, monitors, and microphones. Several rows of stadium seats line three sides of the room and a raised platform takes up much of the far wall. On this platform, the praise team sets up their instruments and performs for the entire worship service. At the end of the service, the band and several male church members remove all the instruments, equipment, and banner that hung on the back wall, and put the chairs back in order. The only thing that remains are traces of olive oil which were dabbed softly on the stadium seats by the intercessors before church goers arrived.

One Sunday morning in August of 2003, Pastor Akosah performs a baby dedication (asubø) for a Ghanaian family. The service has been a typical African Pentecostal experience. Music drives the entire worship service and prompts the worshippers on how to respond physically and emotionally. The service begins with an hour of live music by the praise team, Shekinah Glory. The band first plays a set of "praise" songs, which are gospel songs that are set to an up-tempo highlife rhythm. While the keyboardist and bass guitarist line out a simple chord progression, the drummer plays a four-on-the-floor bass drum pattern and a syncopated highlife rhythm on the high-hat and snare drum. The lead singer and four backing vocalists sing in a call and response form. Coincidentally, one of the backing vocalists at the church is a Christian Wolof woman from Senegal. The upbeat songs move people to dance, sway, and clap along. Each simple song form is repeated several times before moving to the next song. Oftentimes, the same chordal structure will continue as several of the short repetitive songs continue one after another, creating a medley of songs with which the congregation can

easily sing and clap along. As each new song begins, a lyric sheet is shone on the back wall from a transparency.

Praise songs set list

1. We bring sacrifice of praise
2. Celebrate Jesus celebrate
3. This is the day that Jesus made/I will enter his gates/He has made me glad
4. I serve a God who never fails
5. The Lord reigneth
6. Today, today
7. On the mountain
8. We give you all the praise
9. All praise be given unto thee.

Worship songs set list

1. As we gather at the river
2. Steadfast love
3. Father I adore you
4. Be glorified
5. More love

As the music and singing continue virtually non-stop, a few women in the congregation slap tambourines in various rhythmic patterns. A couple of elderly women dressed in colorful screen print outfits make their way to the center of the room and dance around in an imaginary counter-clockwise circle. Their dancing shows composure and control. Bent slightly forward at the waist, with their elbows bent, they step to the ground

rhythm. With each small step forward, the opposite hip juts out. After about thirty minutes of upbeat praise songs, the praise team switches to a set of "worship" songs, which are slow tempo ballads and contemporary gospel compositions. These songs inspire a wholly different response from the congregation. Their jubilant swaying, clapping, and two-stepping switches to a broad torso swaying with their arms stretched upward, palms to the ceiling, and eyes closed. The room rumbles as people collectively pray repetitive, overlapping phrases. Some speak in tongues and it sounds like an African dialect, with short and long syllables and tonal inflections. "Sheki bababa, oh ama baka tarama." They speak in tongues with cool, calm control and they alternate this mode freely with regular speech.

After the sermon, more singing, and prayers, Pastor Akosah announces that the baby dedication will begin, and requests that the family come to the front of the sanctuary. The mother and father come forward with the baby girl, dressed in a white christening gown, and face the pastor. Soon, they are surrounded by a dozen family members and representatives. The men in the family are dressed in suits and the women in western formal dresses. The pastor calls out to the praise team to play a song while he prays. The band quickly peruses their set list that they played at the opening of the service and select a worship song that is appropriate to the occasion. Holding the baby, the pastor prays for blessings for the young daughter, mentioning her by name, and welcomes her into the church community. He hands the baby to his wife, who acts as his assistant during the ceremony. As the pastor's wife holds the sleeping baby, the pastor steps forward with the small crystal bottle of olive oil. He dots the infant's forehead and crown with oil as he softly chants a prayer to Jesus Christ. Olive oil is a prominent feature in Pentecostal healing and dedication practices. Referencing bible

verses James 5:14-15[14] and Mark 6:13[15], the church identifies olive oil as a symbol of the Holy Spirit and a powerful medium for consecrating people and objects. As the pastor prays aloud, the praise team continues to play slow worship songs and sing softly in the background.

At the end of the dedication, a special offering is collected for the baby and family. The praise team switches gears and plays a quick tempo highlife song as the congregation forms two lines, one coming from either side of the room, creating a dance procession towards the basket at the center of the room. Each line of people dances in a two-step motion, bent slightly forward at the waist with elbows bent and fists clutched and their money or check hidden in one hand. As each person approaches the basket, they discreetly drop their offering inside and dance back to their seats.

After church, we gather in the dining hall for refreshments of soda and cake. I search out the parents to find out if they plan to have an outdooring afterwards. After speaking a little Twi with them and letting them know about my research on Ghanaian immigrant family ceremonies, they invite me to the outdooring that afternoon at the parents' apartment in South Los Angeles. I ask permission to take pictures and they graciously approve. Later, it turns out that a picture I take of the father holding the baby is the only one they have of them together, and they order ten copies from me to send to their family members in Ghana.

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[14]James 5:14-15. 14. Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; 15. and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him.

[15]Mark 6:13. 13. And they were casting out many demons and were anointing with oil many sick people and healing them.

Inside the small apartment, the sofas and chairs have been pushed against the walls, opening up the center of the room for dancing. Against the far wall an entertainment center holds a television, a stereo, and speakers. Atop the stereo sits a white stuffed bear with a red ribbon around its neck. Behind the stereo on the wall is a framed picture of Jesus with fiber optic colored lights emanating from his body. As I enter the apartment, I greet the hosts and make my way around the perimeter of the room greeting the seated guests. There are three men seated against the wall whom I recognize from church so I sit next to them. Gospel highlife music blasts on the home stereo. The ladies of the house pass through the living room with trays of canned sodas and bottled Heineken and offer them to guests. I take a can of coke. The men seated next to me each take a beer. When I ask the men if the pastor is coming to the reception, one of them remarks, "No, I don't think so." Then he jokes, "If he was coming, we would have to hide our beer." As I sit and wait, I am thinking that the guests appear quite serious and quiet for a celebration. No one is eating or dancing. They only sit quietly or talk intermittently among themselves. Soon I discover that the festivities cannot officially begin until the elder man of the family arrives to pour libations. No one makes a move until this customary gesture is performed. Now, two elderly men have arrived. One man goes to the back bedroom and changes out of his casual clothes into a wrap of screen printed cloth folded down around his waist. After pouring some liquor into a small glass, the old man steps onto the threshold of the front door and pours libations outside onto the front stoop. Each time he dribbles a few drops of liquor onto the concrete stoop, he chants a call to the ancestors. Outside, a young man is videotaping and I am snapping pictures (see photos).

Now that the ceremony has officially been opened, the guests begin to dine and dance. The dining table of the small apartment is spread with a buffet of large aluminum tins of Ghanaian food. We load up our paper plates with fufu and groundnut soup, rice and fish, *banku* and *okro* soup, and fried plantain. The highlife music continues in the background as we eat. One of the guests from Côte d'Ivoire asks permission to play some other music on the stereo and fetches a tape of Congolese *soukous* music from his car. The soukous plays for a while, but does not inspire any dancing from the guests. After awhile, one of the male family members puts on another tape of highlife music and soon, nearly all the guests are dancing in the middle of the living room. Women and young men form tight circles and take turns going to the center of the small circle to dance and then retreat to the outer circle. One young woman brings the baby girl into the circle and dances with her. Holding the baby, she gently manipulates her limbs to the music. Then the father holds the baby and bounces her to the two-pulse highlife rhythms. This activity not only teaches the child from the earliest age how to interpret and move to the rhythms of the national music. It also sends information to the child about the value of music and dance in a social setting. The circle dissolves into couples dancing between persons of opposite gender and same gender. After a couple of hours of dancing, I am feeling tired from the long day and sadly leave the celebration. The dancing will continue into the night.

A Ghanaian (Chamba) Muslim Naming Ceremony in Los Angeles

On October 31, 2001, in a Los Angelese hospital delivery room, a baby girl is born to an African American woman. Moments after the birth, her husband, Mazin,[16] a recent arrival from Ghana, picks up the newborn and draws her towards his face. In the baby's right ear, he whispers the adhan, or call to prayer.

Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar.
Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar.
Ash-hadu alla ilaha illa-llah.
Ash-hadu anna Muhammadar-Rasulullah.
Hayya 'ala-s-Salah, Hayya 'ala-s-Salah..
Hayya 'ala-l-falah, Hayya 'ala-l-falah.
Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar.
La ilaha illa-llah.

Allah is the Greatest, Allah is the Greatest.
Allah is the Greatest, Allah is the Greatest.
I bear witness that there is none worthy of worship but Allah.
I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.
Hasten to the Prayer, Hasten to the Prayer.
Hasten to real success, Hasten to real success.
Allah is the Greatest, Allah is the Greatest.
There is none worthy of worship but Allah.

[16] I have fictionalized the names of the father and mother, but have kept the baby's real name, because of the significance of the child's name in the naming ceremony.

He turns the baby slightly and in her left ear, he recites the *iqamah*, or standing for prayer, a call heard in the mosque when the *salah* (prayer) is about to begin. Next, the father tells the child her name in Chamba, whispering in her ear:

Siyeedi Hibah.

You shall be known as Hibah.

From this moment on, the child is the only one privileged to know her name until the formal naming ceremony in seven days. The father explains his actions to the nurses and later to me in an interview, "We believe that the first thing a child hears will have an influence on the child. So you don't want to start out the child with something that you don't believe in or something bad. And I think science has proven that's right here, that when the child is in the womb, it can hear things. How much more when it comes out?" (21 May 2004, personal communication).

The practice of revealing the name to the baby his or herself is common to many northern Ghanaian ethnic groups, including Hausa and Konkoba. It is in contrast to most southern ethnic groups, including Asante, Ga, Fante, and Ewe, who regard a newborn baby as a visitor during its first week of life, and conceal the name until the official naming ceremony. Common to all West African ethnic groups is the belief that the name should be chosen very carefully, because a child's name has a deep, almost supernatural influence on what kind of person the child will become.

> We believe that the name reflects on the child. A bad name means it could be a bad child, it could influence the child. We believe that you have to have a very good name for the child. So when the child grows up and asks, 'Daddy, Mommy, what does my name mean? Why did you give me this name?' And you tell them, 'Oh, your name means 'patience,' so I want you to be very patient when you think, when you act.' And the child will think about it, 'This is my name,' and it can have an influence on the child to be good. On the seventh day, people are waiting, people are anxious to know what name you picked, and why you picked that name. This is my daughter's name, Hibah, meaning 'Gift from God,' and the reason I gave her that name, is she's my only child. I have tried since I've married to have a child and it didn't work out and when I met her mother and we married, she just came unexpected. So as an African, we look at events, things happening to you, to name a child. So I picked it, because I didn't expect it, so she's a gift. And most of the time gifts that you don't expect are very precious (21 May 2004, personal communication).

When they arrive home, he spreads shea butter over the infant's body to protect her from evil spirits and the evil eye. It is one gesture that he manages to do to ensure the baby's spiritual protection in America. He only regrets that hospital policy has prevented him from taking away the placenta, which he would have buried in the ground, a custom with both Islamic and traditional African roots.

Seven days later, the father invites a few friends to a naming ceremony at a mosque, where the imam announces the baby's name and prays for her health and long life. Afterwards, the guests gather in the modest reception room to have refreshments and listen to tapes of Ghanaian music. But for the father, this is only a makeshift gesture, a place holder. He doesn't even take pictures. He tells me, "Because it's so important to have this rite of a naming ceremony when a child is born, I sent the information home that I want them to do

the naming ceremony at home for her, and that they should tape it and send it to me, so when she grows up she will see the difference of how it's done back home and what they do here. It's so big, honestly. I mean what we do here is that we call friends and say my wife is giving birth and I have a child, and in seven days, we meet and play the music that you select and you publicize the name. But back home, it's different" (21 May 2004, personal communication).

A Ghanaian (Chamba) Muslim Naming Ceremony in Ghana

In a village near Accra, Mazin's family prepares for the official naming ceremony for their new daughter Hibah, who is a world away in Los Angeles. Mazin has asked his family back home to perform a proper naming ceremony for his baby so he can show her the tape when she gets a little older. The video captures the significant features of the ceremony. The day before the ceremony, young boys have gone around town distributing kola nuts to the appropriate elders, inviting them to the ceremony. Early the next morning, the women are busy at work in the domestic compound preparing enough rice, fish stew, and *tuo* (local fufu made of corn or millet) to feed everyone who will stop by throughout the day. Several women wearing screenprint and batique boubous with matching headgear in an array of colors – light blue, purple, green, and red – sit in a tight circle over a large aluminum basin of small red tomatoes, washing and cutting tomatoes while talking and laughing. Across the way, several boys are tying up the front and back legs of a sheep, preparing for the slaughter. The boys carry the sheep toward a hole they have dug in the ground. One boy grabs a ribbon of skin along the animal's neck and cuts straight through allowing the blood to pour into the

hole in the ground. The sheep twitches its legs, then lies lifeless. The words "Happy Birthday" superimpose over the screen. A man sharpens a long cutlass and then slices through the skin along the belly of the animal, keeping the insides intact. One man rescues the vital organs from the cavity, and another lifts out the stomach, which resembles a giant jellyfish. "Happy Birthday" flashes on the screen while the men and boys continue to carefully carve up the sheep.

The ladies are now stirring a huge crock of bubbling tomato stew over an outdoor fire while others prepare the tuo. Some young men set up metal poles in the dirt and fasten a gray tarp over it in front of one of the houses in the compound and an elderly lady comes through to inspect it. This will serve as the drumming and dancing area. Back at the cooking area, women take turns stirring the huge iron pot of stew with a long metal spoon. Another adds meat to the pot. The cooking is a community effort among the women, who wander in and out of area, adding ingredients, helping to stir, and cutting up fish and meat.

The next morning, the men and women gather in the mosque to perform the religious part of the naming ceremony, to publicize the child's name and pray for her long life and heath. The men and women are separated in different rooms, with the men in the front room and the women in the back. In the front room, the imam and elders sit quietly on a collection of rugs against a neon green painted wall. Most wear long kaftans and caps and some wear western slacks and shirts. The mosque is filled with men seated against the perimeter of the room with others filling in the available floor space. Outside, a man carrying a silver tray collects money from another man. Then he asks for more money and they deliberate while a third man supervises. After more money is added, he places some hard candies on the tray

next to the stack of bills. Inside the mosque, the tray of cedi notes and candies is placed on the ground next to a bowl of kola nuts before the imam and elders. The imam prays and wipes the prayer onto his face with his open palms. He chants the announcement of the child's name, "Hibah," three times. The men now take turns praying blessings for the child in call and response form. As each man prays, the others respond "Amen" at the end of every phrase. At the end of the prayers, the men collectively murmur a response and wipe their hands on their faces. The imam handles the money from the silver tray and speaks to the congregation of men, who respond in kind at the end of each phrase of his speech. This marks the end of the religious segment of the naming rite. The men spill out into the compound outside to eat from communal bowls of millet and meat stew served up by the women.

The mood back at the family compound is light and celebratory for the outdooring. People mill about talking, laughing, and visiting with one another. Several of the family members go into a room of one of the houses and sit on a couch against a deep blue wall. The ladies talk and laugh all at once towards the camera, communicating their good wishes and blessings to the child and her parents. This group migrates around to different houses, talking, laughing, and gesturing emphatically. Smiling at the camera, they take turns pronouncing the birthmother's name, "Aaliyah! Aaliyah!" and the child's name, "Hibah! Hibah!" As the men return from the ceremony at the mosque, the ladies serve the lunch of rice and stew.

Under the tarp, escaping the dry sunlight, two *longara* (drummers of the small hourglass shaped tension drum) and one *digongora* (drummer of the double-headed bass

drum) strike their instruments with curved wooden sticks and beat out proverbial language in praise of the child and her family line. The lead longara also acts as song leader and leads the group and the guests in a *bucci* (praise song) about the family's clan. Mazin's clan established the village from which he hails, so the song celebrates the idea that even if everyone in the village were to die, the village would still belong to this clan.

Bani bikpe ki to,
binse ndo

Even if everybody dies
They own the village.

The song inspires participation by the guests. One elder lady of the family dances close to the drummer, gesturing with her hands and feet to the right, left, up, and down, signifying the village's magnitude and importance. Then a man dances forward, peels off several bills from a stack, and pastes them on the drummer's forehead. The drumming continues and becomes more emphatic and fervent. The lady dancing bends sharply at the waist and moves her elbows in wing-like motion, while she accentuates the drum rhythms with her derriere. Other ladies approach her and place dollar bills and coins on her sweating forehead as she dances. Two to three more people join her to mark off a loose circle that includes the drummers at one end. The drum break patters out proverbial language to which the dancer articulates with her hips and behind and then thrusts a finalizing bump at the end of the drum dialogue. On the next song, the men take over the dancing area forming a tight

circle as one man at a time goes in the center to dance solo. The words of the songs, which are both drummed and sung, celebrate the valor and warrior aspect of the Chamba people, describing the wars they have won and the enemies they have vanquished. Other songs detail different activities in the village or heroics of the family's clan. These songs "place" the guest of honor, the child Hibah, who is not actually present, but regarded as a member of the lineage, in a regional and historical context of kinship.

Thoughts

Family ceremonies reinforce and regenerate kinship bonds through a series of customary rites that celebrate the new family roles that people have created for themselves. For some, these ceremonies hinge on recognizing and ritualizing the interactive relationship between humans and their ancestors. As we have seen, naming ceremonies are sites at which Ghanaians creatively negotiate religious and traditional performance practices. Within these negotiations, certain traditional practices continue to be contested. For instance, today, Ghanaian Christians are divided over the practice of pouring libations in ceremonies. Without condemning traditional cultural practices wholesale, some Christians view certain traditional aspects of the naming ceremony as running counter to their religious path and giving an open invitation to Satan. The prohibition over pouring libations is rooted in western missionary ideology that conflated African traditional religious practices with demonic worship and fetishism. Using liquor for libations and symbolic rites were misunderstood by missionaries as a satanic practice, given liquor's potency for communicating with beings in the spirit world. Other Ghanaian Christians refuse to abandon traditional rituals such as pouring

libations because of its deep association with the interactive relationship between living beings and ancestors, a cornerstone of Ghanaian traditional cosmology and an important indicator of cultural identity. The founder of the Afrikania Religion (a reformed African Traditional Religion of Ghana) summed up the Afrikania church's stance on including libations in the worship and in family ceremonies as choosing to "reject obnoxious western culture which was forced on us by the colonialists" (Anti 1987). Some Christians attempt to resolve the issue by adapting a more biblical interpretation of the traditional rites. For example, during the rite that involves placing water and liquor on the baby's tongue, some Christians substitute water, salt, and honey, chosen for their symbolic qualities in the Bible. According to Pastor Vincent Akosah of the Christ-Citadel International Church in Los Angeles, water symbolizes the Word of God as streams of life-giving water (John 7:37-38)[17], salt symbolizes truth and integrity (Matthew 5:13)[18], and honey represents wisdom (Isaiah 7:15)[19]. Ironically, Anti uses the same bible passage, John 7:37-38, to support his argument that since the act of pouring libations is mentioned in the New Testament, it is appropriate for use in contemporary ceremonies. Thus, Ghanaian Christians don't always agree on their interpretations and appropriations of biblical references, but adapt them to particular ideologies. In his study of African identity in a global systemic process, Jonathan Friedman identifies that "even if African churches have a deep knowledge of the Bible, the way in which they use it is quite congruent with their own cosmologies. Thus, while from the point

[17]John 7:37-38. 37. Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. 38. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'"

[18]Matthew 5:13. 13. You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men.

of view of the objects – the Bible, church buildings, the entire array of symbols – it might appear that they have been assimilated into Christianity, in another sense, they have assimilated Christianity into their own world" (Friedman 1994:28).

To negotiate between the prohibitions of the received religion and traditional religious practice, Ghanaian immigrants devise new ways of performing their rites that are spiritually and emotionally satisfying. In some cases, they adapt Christian concepts into otherwise traditional performance contexts, in effect "assimilating Christianity into their own world." Christians (as well as Muslims) who choose to pour libations often diffuse the fetish aspect by using water rather than liquor. Using water for pouring libation de-activates the magical element and renders the activity merely symbolic. The Akan proverb, "AdeE a yEde nsa yE no, yen mfa nsuo nyE!" meaning, "You can't use water to do something that requires liquor," indicates that pouring water for libations lacks the power to invoke the ancestral spirits since ancestors demand liquor to drink. And as indicated above, Ghanaian Christians also associate water as a symbol of Jesus' life and power, using biblical verses as evidence. Thus, using water for libations can be transposed into a Christian context.

In other cases, Ghanaian Christians keep the religious and traditional rites separate by performing them at different times and different locations. For example, a family may perform the asubø (baby dedication) in the church and later perform the outdooring in the home and have a family elder pour libations to honor the ancestors. This strategy conforms the family to the appropriate Christian ethics by publicly dedicating the newborn to the church community and at the same time, appeases the ancestors by continuing a tradition of

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[19]Isaiah 7:15. 15. He will eat curds and honey at the time He knows to refuse evil and choose good.

pouring libations in the context of a kinship-based rite. By keeping the two religious practices separate and distinct, Ghanaian immigrants can "have their cake and eat it too."

Ghanaian Muslims also struggle to reconcile their indigenous worldviews regarding ancestors with Islam's prohibitions against venerating otherworldly spirits. Islam prohibits its followers from creating images of other beings with the intention of worshipping them or asking for assistance or deliverance, on the grounds that the dead cannot help the living. This obviously runs counter to the African traditional belief that the link between the living and the dead is interactive and crucial for maintaining a social and spiritual balance. To reconcile this dilemma over traditional obligations towards ancestors and Islamic adherence, Ghanaian Muslims operate along a continuum of religious faith and practice. In the center of this continuum are those who seek guidance from either side of the religious spectrum, be it consulting a malaam or a traditional soothsayer, depending on the circumstances (see Chernoff 2000:271).

A central element of family ceremonies in Ghana revolves around the performance of traditional music and dance, through which people express both outwardly and spiritually this familial bond between kin and their ancestral forebears. However, Ghanaian and Senegalese immigrants in Los Angeles tend to abandon the traditional aspect of the rituals for a variety of reasons, mostly owing to a shortage of traditional musicians, along with a desire to modernize. One young Ghanaian drummer, who has lived in L.A. for three years, has tried hard to establish himself as a drummer of African music, with little support from his expatriates. His chief complaint is that Ghanaian immigrants in Los Angeles do "tuxedo functions" where they hire a DJ to play highlife and the more westernized hiplife music, but

fail to include traditional drumming and dancing, and as a result, lose the essence of their culture which for him, lives through the drums.

With regard to popular music, Kwashi Amevuvor, an Ewe immigrant and notable master drummer, expressed to me that Ghanaians abroad prefer listening to older highlife hits rather than newer highlife or especially hiplife songs because older songs have a nostalgic quality that deepen one's identity as a Ghanaian (25 April 2004, personal communication). Hiplife is an urban youth phenomenon in Ghana, a modern conglomerate of an African American hip hop aesthetic and an already hybrid West African popular genre. To create hiplife, young artists blend sampled highlife tunes with produced beats and then rap over the tunes. Many Ghanaians feel that hiplife is too westernized, too electronic, and lacks the warmth and musicianship of classic highlife. Some music industry insiders warn that hiplife is having deleterious effects on Ghana's place in the world music market and even endangers the future of Ghanaian popular music altogether (Collins 2002), while others see its "reliance on foreign influences, lack of instrumentalists, and focus on individualism…[as] a passing phase" (Salm and Falola 2002:187).

After interviewing many Ghanaians concerning their attitudes about music and attending many Ghanaian social functions in Los Angeles, I have come to a conclusion. To echo Kwashi Amevuvor's opinion, Ghanaian immigrants experience joy and satisfaction listening and dancing to highlife songs that give them a nostalgic feeling of home. The particular songs that elucidate this nostalgic engagement depend on the person's age and how long they have lived in America, hence which songs were popular when they were in Ghana. For Kwashi, these would be highlife songs of the brass band period and early dance-band

period by artists such as E.T. Mensah and the Tempos from the 1950s. For many people in the 30s or 40s, burgher highlife of the 1980s by Eric Agyeman, Daddy Lumba, and Amakye Dede, along with the zoblazo sounds of Ivoirian neighbor Meiway strike the deepest chord. While nostalgia in immigrant studies is nothing new, I note this phenomenon in contrast with Senegalese immigrants, who express that they prefer to keep up with the newest, latest hit songs and the accompanying dance styles coming out of Dakar. New arrivals from Senegal even tease Senegalese immigrants for being literally out of step with the newest dance styles. This difference between Senegalese and Ghanaians must be attributed to each of their discourse about music and the values they place on popular music consumption and expression.

However, to complicate matters, I have also noticed a contradiction between what people say and what people do with regard to hiplife. While dancing at a Ghanaian wedding reception, the DJ played a hiplife tune amongst the other highlife and makossa songs, and the guests were no less pleased with the song than with the other classic highlife numbers, and in fact thoroughly enjoyed themselves. They waved their hands in the air during the refrain, sang along to the pre-recorded older highlife tune, and smiled as the DJ on the song rapped. It did not seem like these Ghanaians were disappointed at the musical style, but probably experienced it as a new modern phase of the music they love, the music that expresses their Ghanaian identity. Suffice it to say that highlife, in a spectrum from old to new, presents a range of meanings and sensations for Ghanaian immigrants to choose from for formulating their new identities.

Conclusion

Naming ceremonies are sites for celebrating the expansion of an extended family and inculcating the newest member into a religious and cultural system. For African immigrants in the U.S., who are tethered to the homeland through kinship, the diasporic naming ceremony can add a new dimension to a family's biography and status position, particularly through the circulation of videotapes of the ceremonies.

By centering the fieldwork research in Los Angeles, which is a fairly significant outpost for Mouride vendors, we are afforded a unique glimpse into some of the social transformations currently taking place within the Mouride Diaspora. The ethnographic evidence of naming ceremonies among Mouride families and friends in Los Angeles reveals that the performance of kin-based ceremonies such as the naming rite is important for Senegalese immigrants for asserting and maintaining different aspects of identity such as class, caste, ethnicity, nationality, age-group, religious, and gender. At the same time, naming ceremonies in the Diaspora demonstrate certain identity shifts and adaptive strategies at the level of performance. For one, the interdependent relationship between géer and géwël is clearly marked through musical performance practice. The géwël at the Baye Fall naming ceremony above move around the reception hall singing short repetitive praise songs to the géer, who in turn exercise their grace and honor through giving money to the singers. However, during the speech section of the ceremony, the ladies express that the expected behavior between females of different castes has been somewhat relaxed and replaced with stronger bonds of sisterhood. In the area of dance, it appears that women, regardless of caste, experience more freedom and autonomy to dance suggestively at the naming ceremonies

whether or not there are men present. This contradicts Heath's and Buggenhagen's findings on women's performance practice at naming ceremonies in Senegal, which suggests that women are free to dance suggestively in the presence of other women in the domestic compound, but that some women (géer women or middle aged women in particular) dance with restraint in the presence of men. The fact that men are present and that a man is videotape complicates notions of acceptable behavior by Senegalese women. Dancing continues to be a field in which women exercise power and critique, and I intend to investigate the phenomenon further.

Secondly, the Senegalese worldview features an interconnectedness of grace, beauty, and spirituality. The Mouride aesthetic, in particular, weighs heavily on the concept of sacrifice through giving. In her work on the Mouride trade Diaspora and the Senegalese family, Buggenhagen examines how masculine grace and feminine grace are achieved differently through different ways of performing, how qualities such as kersa (honor) and baraka (salvation) are expressed and maintained through giving and how feminine beauty and displays of consumption at family ceremonies can actually replace spiritual sacrifice in building a family's credibility. These unique Senegalese attributes and performance roles play out in family ceremonies in the Diaspora. Senegalese women, many of whom are wives of Mouride traders, exercise these attributes by looking stunningly beautiful and turned out at naming ceremonies, by dancing gracefully and masterfully to mbalax, and by contributing to their friends and family members' ndowtel through a ritual practice of gift-giving.

Third, Senegalese clearly adapt their naming rituals to meet the limitations of the new environment while retaining the integrity and spirit of the ritual. The first consideration in

recognizing the lengths that people go in adapting the ritual is the size of the event and the number of guests. In Senegal, an entire town will attend a naming ceremony, which will occupy a whole day or a weekend. In Los Angeles, given the relatively small immigrant community, the difficulties of traveling across the city, and work restraints, a naming ceremony will attract one or two dozen people. The naming rite itself will take place during the morning. Afterwards, some people will go to work and then return for the ndowtel that afternoon or evening. The women will have cooked most of the food for the party the night before. Then they go to work in the afternoon and return to finish the food, get dressed up, and attend the celebration.

As videos of naming rituals circulate around the Diaspora, the distance between extended families collapses. As we have seen from the videos, one of the most powerful channels of celebration and identification is music that identifies people as being related. For example, in the home video of the outdooring near Accra for the baby girl born in Los Angeles, the family celebrates her birth by situating the newborn in a complex of familial relationships, which are expressed through proverbial drum language, songs, and dances. And although the baby and her parents are not present during this ritual and celebration, the video will serve as her official naming ceremony. The music and dance performances at naming ceremonies, which circulate across the Diaspora, re-inscribe ethnic and national identities, reinforce social relationships, and accentuate the kinship ties between extended families across the Atlantic.

Figure 32, 33. At an Akan outdooring in Los Angeles, an elder pours libations on the door stoop while a family member videotapes. (photos by Sherri Canon)

Chapter Five

Weddings

When Cultures Clash

Mazin had been in Los Angeles for about a year when he met and fell in love with an African American woman. Like the majority of Ghanaian immigrants, Mazin had come to the U.S. to go to graduate school in hopes of securing a job in the professional and managerial sector. And like most Ghanaians, he was supporting himself and his education by working in a service sector job, in his case, as a zoo employee. Since his marriage in Ghana had failed to yield a child and had ended in divorce, he decided to pursue his new girlfriend for marriage. Unfamiliar with American cultural systems for engagement and marriage, the Ghanaian Muslim did his best to recreate the formalities of his own culture. In Ghana, Muslim weddings culminate from a long formal negotiation process between two families.

Among his ethnic group, Chamba, the process begins when a man tells his father that he is interested in a woman. The bachelor takes one or two male family members, usually his father and brother, to the girl's house to offer kola nut. The senior brother does all the talking during the meeting, speaking on behalf of the single man, and announces to the father of the house, "I've seen something in your house that I like," to which the father responds, "What have you seen?" and the man replies, "Your daughter." This serves as an introduction, which

precedes the formal request for marriage. Once the formal request is made and accepted, the complex and often drawn-out dowry negotiation kicks off between the potential bride and groom's family members.

With no family in the U.S., Mazin decides to take a male friend to his girlfriend's aunt and uncle's house. They sit down in the living room and his friend announces to the uncle that Mazin wishes to marry his niece. The aunt and uncle are noticeably confused and wonder aloud why he doesn't ask them himself. After explaining the Chamba tradition, they graciously agree to go along with the interchange. Mazin's attendant asks the aunt and uncle what the bride will want for the dowry and they tell him, "Well, she wants a ring." This seemed a strange request to Mazin, who was accustomed to amassing a large amount of dowry items including several pieces of ritual cloth, household items, drinks, clothing, jewelry, and cash. But to honor her request, he bought her a ring worth a thousand dollars. As for the appropriate clothing and underwear items for the bride, which in Africa, his sisters would normally buy, he simply gave his fiancée the money to buy them herself. He was again taken aback when she seemed offended at his gift, asking him, "Why are you giving me this money?"

On their wedding day, the couple went to a Los Angeles mosque along with their representatives. This was in stark contrast to African Muslim tradition in which the bride and groom are not present at the ceremony in the mosque but rather are represented by male family members from both sides. At the mosque, the imam read three verses from the Qur’an regarding marriage, prayed blessings for the couple, and announced that they were married. Afterwards, they gathered in a room of the mosque for a small reception where they listened

to tapes of highlife and reggae music. And while Mazin was happy to be getting married, the whole process of the wedding ceremony left him feeling hollow and disconnected from his culture and his family. Throughout the process, Mazin had plans of taking his wife home to Ghana to perform an authentic Chamba wedding complete with traditional drumming and dancing, ritual foods, and a systematic gift exchange, but unfortunately, the couple divorced before that would happen.

Recounting the story of their quick engagement and wedding, Mazin reminisces about the way Muslim weddings are contracted and performed in Ghana. He explains, "There is a traditional side and an Islamic side," revealing that, as in baby naming ceremonies, the religious and traditional aspects of the event are conceptualized as distinct and performed in separate ceremonies. The traditional components of the marriage include the compulsory rites and negotiations between the two families that precede the religious marriage ceremony, and also include the celebratory activities and rites which take place after the religious ceremony. Before a wedding can take place, the families perform an elaborate cycle of negotiation and formalities revolving around bridewealth payments. The man's formal introduction and announcement of his desire to marry sets in motion a series of events beginning with the girl's father and mother inspecting the clan of the potential bridegroom for any diseases or scandals. Next, the male family members make their formal request for marriage by taking 75 to 100 pieces of kola nut to the bride's parents, who distribute the kola among all the family members and decide whether to accept the initial request.

The next step involves the negotiation of the dowry, also known as bridewealth or bride price. These terms require some qualification. Depending on the cultural group in sub-

Saharan Africa, "dowry" can denote either the gift of money given by the bride's family directly to the couple as a type of pre-mortem inheritance (Goody 1973), or it can refer to the gifts, including money, offered by the groom's family to the bride's family as compensation for the taking the daughter away from the family. "Bridewealth" or "bride price" in all cases denotes the gifts or money offered by the groom's family to the bride's family. In this ethnography, my consultants from both Ghana and Senegal used the terms dowry and bridewealth interchangeably to mean the gifts given by the groom's family to the bride's family. Thus, in the ethnographic examples, bridewealth and dowry are used interchangeably.

The dowry negotiation among Ghanaian Muslim cultures has historical and social bases in both traditional and Islamic practices, and thus results in a variable amount of overlap or redundancies in some aspects of the ritual performance. For instance, tradition demands that the dowry be given to the bride's family before the wedding ceremony, but Islamic law requires that the dowry is presented the day of the wedding ceremony. Therefore, while the traditional negotiation of the dowry is completed before the wedding, there is also a symbolic gesture during the marriage ceremony in the mosque whereby the imam announces the amount of the brideprice, to which the guests acknowledge their acceptance. The dowry is comprised of special gifts (*koriya* in Hausa)[20] ranging from several six-yard pieces of high quality African fabrics, household items, drinks, clothing, shoes, headgear, underwear, bras, jewelry, perfume, and money. Traditionally, cattle was the most important and prestigious bargaining tool in northern Ghana, followed in value by sheep and goats. But today, cash has replaced livestock as the most significant dowry item. In Islam, the more money offered, the

better. In traditional practice, the amount and dollar value of the African cloth in the koriya is a direct measure of a family's social status. The contribution of cloth is always in odd numbers with seven being a moderate number and twelve being the highest amount. The number eleven is never used as a gift, but is customarily rounded off to twelve. Mazin gave twelve pieces of cloth to his first wife in Ghana, which matched the status of his royal lineage. His family name, Kangara, traces back to the founders of the village from which he hails. Kangara literally means "peg" and denotes the foundation of the village, which is unshakable. The name of his clan is Larry, a term meaning someone who gathers things together or a person who owns a great deal. Hence the song that the drummers sang at his daughter's naming ceremony (see chapter four), which said, "Even if everybody dies, the village remains theirs."

In a matrilineal ethnic group, the man's female family members take the special gifts to the woman's female family members and perform the negotiations. But in Chamba, a patrilineal society with matrilineal aspects, the men are the spokespersons for the negotiations, but the women have the ultimate power in the final decision and customarily disapprove of an initial offer and ask for more money. Once the dowry is agreed upon, the engagement period begins and continues until the families are ready to perform the wedding. During the engagement period the bride and groom do not see or talk to one other. The date of the wedding catches the bride by surprise, literally.

Among northern Ghanaian ethnic groups, the traditional wedding is comprised of an elaborate, three day long ceremony filled with music, dancing, food, and socializing.

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[20]Hausa is the dominant language in northern Ghana and is in common use among ethnic groups in addition

Beginning on Friday after sunset at the bride's house, the girl is picked up or "captured" by her aunts, traditionally by surprise. One aunt sneaks up on the bride-to-be and pours henna mixed with perfume (*lali* or *ladly*) over the girl's head, indicating that the girl is no longer single. An old woman cries out ululululation outside, which serves as an announcement that the wedding is taking place. For the duration of the weekend, while the ladies prepare for the wedding feast, the bride-to-be is confined, while female relations feed and attend to her and decorate her with henna from head to toe, including her clothes. Outside in the compound, drummers stand in the shade and beat out drum language on *longa* (hourglass tension drums) and *digongo* (double-headed bass drums) as an announcement for the wedding. They sing and drum praise songs about the tribe and the family for fifteen to twenty minutes. Similar to the *jali* of the Mande area of Mali, Senegal, the Gambia, and Guinea, the drummers in these cultures serve as praise singers, storytellers, and genealogists.

The next day is devoted to the families hosting each other with traditional foods, drumming, singing, dancing and preparing the bride and groom with festive wedding costumes and henna. Early on Saturday morning, the bride's family sends someone to the groom's house to collect money to finance the cooking and entertainment for the entire weekend at the bride's family's compound. Then, the groom's family and friends go to the bride's home to be entertained by the bride's family. As guests come and go all day, people eat, pray, and chat with one another. Meanwhile, the bride and her friends cook at another location. Here, drummers again beat out drum language and proverbial praise songs to broadcast the wedding. The bride emerges from her room and dances, covered in henna and

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to each ethnic group's language.

clothed in a white dress. As drummers sing her praises, her friends peel off dollar bills and paste them on her forehead or toss them towards her. Later, the bride's family is treated to a feast and live drumming and singing at the groom's house. Here, the drummers drum around the house where the bride is gong to live. The groom has dressed casually for this event, aware that his friends are going to dump a large amount of henna, indigo, and other materials over his head as a sign that he is leaving bachelorhood.

The religious wedding ceremony takes place on Sunday in the mosque and is quite brief. The three requirements for a Ghanaian Muslim wedding are that the family must show the dowry to the guests, the couple must have representatives, and the imam must lead prayers. The bride and groom are not present at the mosque during the ceremony, but are represented by their witnesses. Also, in African Muslim weddings, women are generally not allowed in the mosque, so weddings are performed by male family members and representatives. The bride's representative, if it is her first marriage, is always her father and if a subsequent marriage, is someone of good character. Inside the mosque, the imam announces the bridegroom's father's intention to marry the bride's family's daughter. The grooms' family pronounces, "We are asking for the lady's hand in marriage" and the family responds affirmatively and they repeat the interchange twice. The imam says, "By the power invested in me, I declare you wife and husband." He reads from the Qur'an, verse 1 of chapter 4, verse 102 of chapter 3, and verse 70 of chapter 33. He announces the amount of the brideprice to all the guests and they accept and this concludes the marriage ceremony.

Meanwhile, on Sunday morning, three to four elder women have brought the bride to the husband's house. Inside her husband's room, the elder women instruct her on being a wife

and mother, and provide her with the necessary household items such as kitchen utensils and pans. Following the religious ceremony in the mosque, there is a large reception at the bride's family's house that includes more music, dancing, food, and drinks. If the family is wealthy, they will slaughter a cow or lamb for the festivities. Specialist cooks are often hired to prepare the customary wedding cuisine, which includes fufu and rice with special spices, palm oil, and sunflower seeds. Drummers are on hand to sing and drum praise songs about the families and inspire guests to dance and sing.

Reminiscing about the intricacies of traditional weddings in Ghana, Mazin is high-spirited and animated. As he describes the details of the drummed praise songs and dancing during the wedding celebrations at the family's compound, he appears to be transported to his own wedding celebration some years ago. But then, recalling that his American marriage ended before he could honor it with the appropriate family ritual, he is jolted back to the present day and time.

African Muslim Weddings in Los Angeles

According to the imam of the King Fahad Mosque in Los Angeles, who is a Ghanaian immigrant, the dominant practice among African immigrants is for the parents to perform the entire religious ceremony in Africa in the absence of the bride and groom (10 July 2003, personal communication). However, the imam prefers that the immigrants perform the wedding ceremony themselves in Los Angeles so that the couple can witness their marriage rites and hear the Qur'anic verses and speeches. If the parents are not able to travel from Africa to attend, the imam requests a letter or fax from the parents stating their approval

and asks that they provide a representative for themselves to give the bride away. Following the marriage ceremony, it is common for Muslim immigrants to hold a western-style wedding reception on the same day or a week after at a reception hall or hotel conference room. The reception has the flavor of a westernized celebration with African elements including traditional African foods, African popular music by a DJ, and dancing until late in the night. The music at Muslim wedding receptions is largely nationalistic in character. The DJ selects the genres and songs which best reflect the home area of the wedding party and the guests to provide a nostalgic experience, although sometimes the DJ adds a few soul or R&B songs by American artists such as Aretha Franklin, Kool and the Gang, or Stevie Wonder.

A Ghanaian (Asante) Christian Wedding in Hawthorne, California

Like Ghanaian Muslims, Ghanaian Christians also negotiate between the traditional and religious aspects of marriage by performing separate ceremonies that distinguish the "traditional" from the "religious" rites. But a closer look at Ghanaian Christian wedding ceremonies in Los Angeles reveals a constant overlapping and merging of religious and traditional aspects during the performance. The performance practices during these ceremonies in terms of song choices, singing styles, and other types of orality such as call and response prayer, closely integrate expressions of ethnic identity, nationalism, and religious orientation. Another major theme in African family ceremonies both in Africa and the Diaspora involves the absence of key players who are represented by stand-ins. A traditional wedding ceremony and reception for a Ghanaian bride and Cameroonian groom in

Los Angeles County reveals a remarkable adaptation of a traditional wedding ceremony at which the family members involved in the dowry negotiation are not who they seem.

In November of 2002, a Ghanaian family performed a traditional Asante wedding (*awaregye*) in the home of the bride's uncle in Hawthorne, a suburb near the Los Angeles Airport. In an awaregye, the male members of the groom's family go visit the home of the bride's family (known as "knocking") to negotiate the items and cash amount in the dowry (*aware akyEde*). In Ghana, the approval of the dowry gifts, monetary amount, and special drinks (*ti nsà*) also serves as the official wedding ceremony. And while there is no official requirement to perform an additional religious ceremony, many Christian families also hold a church wedding (*hyia ayeforø*) to accommodate their religious beliefs and signify that their union is monogamous, but only after the awaregye is completed. Most Ghanaians abroad, however, opt to forego the customary wedding and perform only what many call the "white wedding," or the western Christian wedding ceremony. They do so for two reasons.

First, this generation of Ghanaian immigrants typically has parents still living in Ghana, and the responsibility for the negotiation of the dowry rests with the parents, thus the parents generally complete the dowry negotiations in Ghana in the absence of the bride and groom. After the dowry is approved, the parents contact the couple and affirm that they are married in the customary sense and are free to hold a Christian wedding ceremony. Christians thus refer to the awaregye as the "engagement." If the family does decide to perform an awaregye in the U.S., the parents either fly in to attend or appoint representatives to stand in for them during the ritual, providing them with explicit instructions as to their bridewealth requirements. After the wedding ceremony, the bride's family hosts a reception to celebrate

the union of the two families. After this particular wedding in Hawthorne, the bride and groom hosted a western-style reception at their home, which featured an African buffet and a DJ playing West African dance music in the living room until 4:00 in the morning. I was invited to the awaregye and reception by the bride and her cousin, whom I met at a Ghanaian funeral reception a few weeks earlier. The family encouraged me to take pictures and videotape of the event, which helped me draw up the ethnographic description. They had also hired a professional videographer and photographer to record the entire ceremony and reception.

On a cool, drizzly Saturday afternoon, the guests arrive in "African time," one to two hours after the scheduled starting time of noon. They quickly step into the house out of the rain and greet the host and other guests. The women are dressed in black and white or brightly colored traditional dresses comprised of a matching blouse (*kaba*), long straight skirt (*slit*), and an extra length of cloth used to tie around the waist or tie a baby around a mother's back (*akatasoø*). A few of the women wear western-style evening attire and they all sport an array of hairstyles and accessories of gold and silver jewelry, matching sandals or pumps, and handbags. The men are sharply dressed in suits or traditional African shirts with slacks, while the men in the immediate family wear black and white *adinkra* cloth robes slung over one shoulder. As the room fills up with people, everyone is asked to take a seat to begin the ceremony. The furniture in the modest sized living room has been situated to create a large circular area designated for the family members of the ceremony, outlined by a large "L" shaped black leather sofa and continued along the back wall with a semi-circular line of folding chairs. Behind those chairs against the far wall is an enormous gloss black

entertainment center housing a big screen TV, a VCR, and a CD player. Opposite the sofa and completing the circle are two empty bar stools designated for the couple during the dowry negotiation. Additional rows of chairs have been set up behind the couch and in the kitchen for guests to view the ceremony.

Gospel highlife music has been playing consistently on the stereo as guests arrive and mingle. When the ceremony begins, the uncle turns the music down and it continues softly in the background as the master of ceremonies, Yaw Adutwum, stands at the juncture of the circle and welcomes the family and the guests to the solemn occasion. He calls on a reverend to say an opening prayer to "commit the whole ceremony into the hands of God." The family stands shoulder to shoulder in the circle, while the guests stand close behind and spill out into the kitchen. The reverend announces quietly that he is going to sing a song in the Ghanaian language (Twi), though he does not announce the title of the song. Rather, he sings out the first word "Ødø," in a declamatory style to which all the Ghanaian guests answer with the completion of the lyric, lining out the words in a slow, swooping manner, mostly in unison, with some harmony.

Solo:	Ødø-ø-ø
Response:	YE wu
	Ødø yE
	Ødø yE wu.

By singing out the initial word in declamatory style, the pastor is both announcing the song and establishing the key for the others to join. The style of singing, in which a soloist

begins a melody line and is then quickly joined by the chorus who continues the line till the end, is a common call and response organization for vocal performance in Ghana (Nketia 1974:140-141). As they repeat the stanza, some of the men contribute an overlapping counter-line to the melody in a deep, gruff baritone and then return to the main text at the end of the line, another common vocal technique among Ghanaians (Nketia 1974:142).

The song, "Ødø YE Wu" (Love Survives till Death), expresses a sentiment appropriate to a traditional Asante wedding, that marriage is forever and that those agreeing to the marriage contract understand this commitment and intend to stay in the marriage until death. The song is meant to remind the couple and those in attendance of the longevity of the contract. The sentiment is also reflected in an Akan proverbial expression, symbolized by the *adinkra* symbol, Ødø YE Wu, or Dua Afe.

Figure 34. Ødø YE Wu, or Dua Afe

This particular song, however, is considered an Akan religious song, and is normally performed in a church. Furthermore, according to traditional Akan culture, there is no music, neither singing nor instrumentation, involved in the negotiation of the dowry, which also serves as the official marriage rite. The singing of religious songs and hymns at Akan weddings is a recent development in Akan culture in Ghana. The incorporation of religious

music and singing in wedding ceremonies (as well as other lifecycle rites such as naming ceremonies) has been the result of people merging traditional ritual practices with western Christian performance practices.

After singing, the reverend prays aloud while some of the ladies whisper, "Jesus," periodically over his speech. As his prayer takes on a more rhythmic quality, built on phrases of regular length with repetitive components, many of the guests respond to the end of each phrase with "Amen," "Jesus," and "Yes." The call and response organization of the prayer binds the guests together in a uniquely African performance practice of rhythmic, repetitive, and interactive orality. Their performance melds spirituality, musicality, and ritual, and Africanizes the space and soundscape of the Los Angeles home.

Yaw Adutwum begins the ceremony by speaking about the significance of marriage for Akans and the importance of continuing Akan cultural traditions while living in America. His opening remarks were so eloquent that I wish to quote him in full.

> In our language, the word "marriage" is called "aware." It means "long" or "a long journey," so every marriage is seen as a long journey and today this journey is beginning from here in Los Angeles, even though we have parties from different parts of Africa coming together and living here. L.A. is the best you can get, because if I were in Ghana, I would not have the opportunity to meet our friends from Cameroon. And very soon, one of you is going to be my brother-in-law. So this is a joyous occasion, but it also demands that we don't forget our traditions and our culture. Even though we believe America is a melting pot, most of us say that it is a salad bowl. In a salad, everything is in there. You eat them together and everybody stays separate. Our sister comes from a cultural heritage that believes in doing things in a certain way and what we do this morning is going to demonstrate what America represents,

> because we are going to have a brother-in-law from a different culture and most of the things we do this morning may not represent what you are familiar with, but we believe that at the end of it all, everything will work together because we know the pastor has prayed this morning (Yaw Adutwum, 9 November 2002).

Adutwum officially welcomes the groom's family and asks the members of the bride's family to go round the circle counter-clockwise and shake hands and greet the groom's family members. He then asks the groom's family to state their mission. The groom's father stands and introduces the brother, who introduces the matron of the family and the male family members seated in the chairs along the circle. It becomes apparent early on that some of the men are stand-ins for the Cameroon family members when the man has to ask their names in order to introduce them. To cover for the lapse, he jokingly says, "We have adopted a lot of Ghanaians to be on our side." In actuality, the groom's brother is really a friend from Cameroon and many of the groom's family members are represented by Ghanaian men who are dressed in Asante kente and adinkra cloth. Next, the matron of the groom's clan stands and announces in pidgin English that her son has gone and picked a fine kola nut, a symbol for his fiancée. She continues that they now find it necessary to go see the tree from which the kola fell, meaning that the groom's family must go and inspect the bride's family to see if they are worthy of joining an alliance with their family. Then, the pastor stands and announces that this official ceremony is crucial since the couple has "known" themselves for a long time, which can be offensive to the ancestors. This alludes to the fact that the couple, both of whom are immigrants in America, have been living together and have had a child together without having performed the customary wedding. He cites an Akan proverb that

says that if there is something that you have to do with wine, you cannot use water to do it,[21] meaning that custom demands that the families exchange bridewealth for the lady's hand in marriage. Then, to complete the introductions, the MC introduces the bride's family (the "tree from which the kola fell") to the groom's family.

The bride's uncle prepares to present the bride (the kola) to the groom's family. This begins a very humorous theatrical scene in the dowry negotiation, which is typical of the Asante awaregye. First, the bride's family demands "transportation money" to bring the bride into the circle, which is ironic because the bride is simply coming from the top of the staircase into the living room. The bride's head is fully covered by a white chiffon cloth as she is escorted by her aunt down the stairs and into the center of the circle. When the groom unveils her, it turns out to be the "wrong kola nut." It is in fact, one of the bride's friends, who is holding out a stack of credit cards towards John,[22] shouting, "What about these three credit cards you gave me?" The crowd laughs, jokes, and derides the woman and the groom-to-be. So the uncle has to get transportation money again to bring down the right kola. The veiled bride is escorted down the staircase, but when the groom reveals her, it is again the wrong kola nut. This time it is a cousin of the bride flashing a box of gold jewelry to him, saying, "Didn't you give me this last night?" The crowd again roars and shouts, "No! That's the wrong kola!" and to John, "John, you have a lot of woman." Now the guests are growing impatient. Yaw says the groom doesn't want to get the wrong kola again, so he has given the transportation money himself. The third bride is escorted down the staircase, but again she is

[21]The proverb is "AdeE a yEde nsa yE no, yen mfa nsuo nyE!" or "You can't use water to do something that requires liquor."

not the true fiancée. In fact, this one is pregnant and flashes a ring that she says he gave her, to which he jokes, "Actually, this one may be true." The crowd laughs and grows verbally impatient. One woman says in pidgin, "Na bring the right kola, please, I de beg." Finally, the fourth covered bride is escorted down the staircase to the center of the circle. This one is the right kola. The crowd notices that her dress, partly visible beneath the cloth covering, is made of the same green lace that matches the groom's outfit. Everyone cheers as he uncovers her head and embraces her. Adutwum asks if their "princess" consents to the man's marriage proposal and she says yes.

At this point, the groom's parents sit to the left of the couple and present the dowry items to the bride's family. The father makes his case for taking the bride away from her family and announces the gifts one by one, prefacing his presentation by saying, "From Cameroon to Nigeria to Benin to Togo to Ghana to L.A. is a long journey and it took all our money, but we have brought a big box as a sign of our appreciation for this lady." First he presents the drinks (ti nsà), which serve as a sign of the request for marriage, in the form of a case of Coca-Cola and a case of Muscatelle, a soft drink from Ghana similar to Sprite. Then he presents a sewing machine and twelve pieces of special African cloth, a crucial part of the negotiation process (see Buggenhagen). His wife reaches into a pile of gifts inside a large black suitcase, swiftly peeling back the silver and white wrapping of each gift to peer inside, and then whispers its contents into the father's ear. Other gifts include pajamas, a gold watch, sewing needles, handkerchiefs, a Bible, and a wedding ring. During the dowry presentation, I wonder to myself why the mother looks at each gift as if she were seeing it for the first time.

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[22] I have fictionalized the names of the groom and bride, but have kept the real name of the master of

Then I become more confused when I recognize the groom's father as the pastor of the Church of Pentecost, which I attended a few weeks before. The Church of Pentecost is an import from Accra with an exclusively Ghanaian membership with worship services translated in Twi. I ask myself, is the Cameroonian groom's father really a Ghanaian preacher? But I won't find the answers until the end of the wedding ceremony. What I discover is that because the bride and groom are from different cultures and since the Cameroonian family is not versed in the Asante tradition, the bride's family has in effect, staged the entire dowry negotiation and recruited fellow Ghanaian immigrants to act as the groom's parents and other family members. The "role" of the groom's parents are being played by Nana, a pastor of the Church of Pentecost, and his wife. Thus, the groom's "mother" must peek at each gift, because it is indeed her first time seeing the gifts that have been sent by the groom's actual parents from Cameroon.

Lastly, Nana presents an envelope that holds a check for the family and a check for the bride. He says, "We want Janice to be able to have money in the bank to get what she needs. We know we can't buy her. We can't pay for her, but we want to appreciate what they have done." One of the Ghanaian men on the bride's side stands and protests, "You give my family small change. Na you can't take my niece away. Now you don't want my niece to go to Ghana no more." In response, Nana offers a gold bracelet, excitedly showing it to the family members around the room. Yaw says, "In our tradition, you have brought the proposal and the gifts, and now they will go away and discuss and come back and tell you if they accept it. Now, the brother-in-law in Akan, we call it *akonte*. We are like in Cameroon. We

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ceremonies, Yaw Adutwum, because he is a scholar and leader in the Ghanaian immigrant community.

have a matrilineal family structure. You have to buy the brother-in-law a machete, so they will have something to weed the cocoa farm, so that one day when the children come to the village they will have something to eat." The bride's family retreats into the kitchen to consult the "old lady." When they return, Yaw explains, "The old lady tells us custom is very important. She appreciates the money and the gifts. But she also says since you are taking someone so precious, a hard worker, we are asking you give 2,000 US Dollars more, not 2,000 cedis, but 2,000 dollars." This evokes chuckles among the crowd, since 2,000 cedis is equivalent to about 25 cents in US Dollars. Nana, speaking as the groom's father, says, "I think I will go consult the family. In our tradition, we have to consult the old man," and he retreats with his group to the kitchen.

During this time, an older woman in the crowd begins playing a hymn on an accordion, creating a sonic backdrop to the proceedings. By the reactions of the guests, it appears that the music is not a formalized segment of the ceremony, but one person's improvisational offering. When the group returns from their discussion in the kitchen, Nana pleads with them to accept an additional $1000 rather than $2000. So, the bride's family retreats to the kitchen to discuss it while the woman plays "Amazing Grace" on her accordion. On their return, Yaw reports that the old lady has said she is not in any way trying to sell the girl because you cannot put a price on someone so precious. "However, whatever you have to do with alcohol you cannot do with water, so we must follow tradition. We are asking for $1500 only." Nana says that the family has accepted the offer, but qualifies, "We're going to give you $1000 and we're going to owe you $500. Here's a check." Amidst laughter and mumbling, Yaw quickly discusses the offer with the family, while the woman

on accordion breaks into another hymn, "Glory, Glory Hallelujah." After a quick confab, he reports, "This girl is so precious and they cannot allow their princess to go into a marriage with debt hanging over her head. So the family says they accept your offer of $1000. However, the brother-in-laws are in. Remember in America, they don't use machete, but mower, and mowers are expensive." Nana thanks the family and promises to buy the mower, and the guests cheer.

Now that the dowry has been agreed upon, they perform the Christian wedding ceremony. Adutwum jokes that Ghanaian immigrants in America have to get married three times in order to fulfill all the requirements, referring to the traditional ceremony, the civil signing of the marriage license, and the Christian wedding. The pastor prays aloud, beginning softly with longer phrases that establish the theme of the prayer, and then breaks up his speech into shorter, emphatic, repetitive phrases to which the guests respond, "Amen." During the prayer and throughout the ring ceremony, Sister Monica continues her accordion accompaniment, which is reminiscint of the musical backdrop one would hear during a Pentecostal church sermon or declaration of faith. The pastor blesses the bride's ring and hands it to the groom, who places it on the bride's finger. He hands the Bible to the groom, who in turn gives it to the bride. Then the pastor hands the groom's ring to the bride and she slips it on the groom's finger. He announces that they are married, and the couple embraces amidst applause. The pastor again prays, beginning by singing a hymn, "Blessed be the Name of the Lord," as the woman picks out the accompaniment on her accordion and the guests quickly join in singing. After the hymn, he prays aloud and again, beginning with longer,

quieter phrases and then builds towards shorter, emphatic, repetitive statements to which the guests respond, "Amen."

> Let the different cultures be a source of strength, not a source of weakness (Amen).
> Let them be a source of unity, not a source of disunity (Amen).
> Let them be a source of happiness, not a source of sadness (Amen).
> Grant them the patience (Amen).
> Grant them the wisdom (Amen).
> To go through together (Amen).
> To remain together (Amen).
> To cry together (Amen).
> To weep together (Amen).
> Have joy together (Amen).
> #
> We are marching forward (Amen).
> We are marching forward on new ground (Amen).
> We are marching forward on higher ground (Amen).
> In the name of Jesus (Amen).
> We are marching forward (Amen).
> Hallelujah (Amen).
> Hallelujah (Amen).

At the prayer's end, the message transmits a decidedly Pentecostal theme, built on the phrase, "We are marching forward," a standard phrase used in the Church of Pentecost in reference to their witnessing program.

Sister Monica plays "The Bridal March" (aka "Here comes the Bride") on her accordion, struggling to pick out the right chords, after which Yaw says, "I think we all agree

that the music provided by Sister Monica has added a different dimension to the whole thing and we thank her." His statement provides another clue that this particular type of music performance is not typical of the awaregye. After the singing and prayers, people come forward to offer advice to the couple on marriage and relationships. The uncle turns up the stereo to play a tape of slow gospel highlife as background music while several men offer their advice and testimonies. Sister Monica comes forward and rather than giving advice, she sings a hymn *a cappella*, "Great is thy Faithfulness," and others join in on the refrain. Yaw delivers some closing remarks and asks the elder of the groom's family "who has taken our princess away" to offer a closing prayer. As a prayer, Nana sings a hymn, "We Owe the Glory to Jesus," and then prays aloud in short rhythmic phrases as the guests respond "Amen" at the end of each phrase. With the ceremony complete, young girls carry in trays of beer and sodas and pass them around the room and guests adjourn to the kitchen to serve themselves from the buffet of Ghanaian food, which includes boiled yams, bean stew, fried chicken, and fried rice.

The entire ceremony, although traditional in scope and purpose, has Christian overtones throughout. For instance, the pastor referred to the ancestors in his opening speech, saying that it is important to perform the ceremony to please the ancestors, yet I did not see anyone pouring libations, which probably owes to the conflict over pouring libations in the presence of church leaders (see the discussion in chapter four). The use of music in the awaregye points to creative ways in which Asante immigrants juxtapose and negotiate between religion and tradition. Although the Asante traditional wedding ceremony does not customarily have a genre of traditional music which corresponds to the different segments of

the ceremony as does the Ghanaian Muslim dowry negotiation ceremony, the Ghanaian Christians intersperse the ceremony with hymns, declamatory call and response prayers, and gospel highlife songs. Popular highlife music frames the ceremony at the beginning and the end, creating a mood and communicating messages to the couple and their community about relationships and love. In fact, as we were eating at the end of the ceremony, I noticed that the master of ceremonies chastised the uncle on his music selection and told him to change the music on the stereo. I asked him why he did that and he explained that the music the uncle had chosen was too slow for the occasion. It was more suited to a funeral, whereas a wedding requires more upbeat songs about love and relationships. Therefore, the popular music during the event, although seemingly incidental and in the background, is used to convey a message and a mood appropriate to the particular lifecycle ceremony.

During the dowry negotiation, one of the guests contributed a personal form of musicality by singing hymns and accompanying herself and others on an accordion. Several clues indicated that the accordion was not a typical contribution to the awaregye, including the guests reactions and the master of ceremonies' comment at the end of the proceedings. However, her improvised accompaniment was considered an acceptable and appropriate form of music-making for the occasion. The accordion, in fact, has a long history in the development of Ghanaian and Nigerian popular and religious musics, having been introduced to the coastal areas of Accra and Lagos by West Indian sailors during the late nineteenth century, along with other portable instruments including the guitar, mandolin, banjo, harmonica, and concertina. One proto-highlife and proto-jùjú style of music called *ashiko* combined the accordion with the gombey drum (wooden frame drum introduced by Sierra

Leonians), acoustic guitar, and musical saw (Collins 1989:221-222). The accordion also became a popular instrument in Ghanaian mission churches because of its portability and easy adaptability to hymn accompaniment. The Nigerian variant of ashiko, performed mainly on the frame drum and carpenter's saw, was largely associated with black Christian immigrant groups in Lagos, particularly Sierra Leonians. Ashiko, with its creative combination of hymns, Yoruba proverbs, Biblical texts, and Latin American rhythms such as Brazilian samba, became a mainstay in syncretic Christian churches in and around Lagos (Waterman 1990:39-42). With the addition of the accordion, electric guitar, and talking drum to the ashiko style, local musicians developed jùjú .

Music and Nationalism at the Wedding Reception

Later that evening, the newly married couple hosts a western-style reception in their home in Hawthorne. Those guests who attended the awaregye earlier have changed from their traditional outfits into western formalwear, the women in sparkling evening dresses, cocktail dresses, or dress slacks and the men sporting suits or ensembles of slacks, shirts, and leather jackets, while the bride now wears a white beaded wedding gown and the groom, a tuxedo. Upon entering the house, the beige carpeted living room to the left has been transformed into a dance floor, with all the furniture pushed against the walls, creating ample floor space, and a lighting effects ball casting blue, green, yellow and red lights around the room. The DJ is stationed in the corner with his back to the room, facing his sound system. DJ Clement, a Cameroonian immigrant, provides a constant soundscape for dancing for the

entire evening. But before the floor is opened for dancing, the celebration begins with an opening prayer and guests are invited to serve themselves from the buffet.

The kitchen is teeming with women who talk and rest after being on their feet all day, cooking and serving food. The dining table in the kitchen is piled with wedding gifts and a guestbook. A corner table holds a tiered wedding cake and silver goblet for toasting. Outside, on the patio, a long buffet of food is divided into two sections separating the Ghanaian and Cameroonian cuisine. The Ghanaian dishes include *waakye*, banku and okro stew, *jollof* rice and stew with beef, fried chicken, and fried plantains, and the Cameroonian dishes include fufu with a bright orange groundnut soup and salad. Adjacent to the buffet is an enclosed patio where guests dine at round white tables decorated with white candles and heart-shaped boxes filled with Hershey's kisses. After dining, the bride and groom come inside to perform western wedding customs including cutting the cake and feeding each other, toasting Champagne, tossing the bouquet and garter, and posing for photos by a professional photographer.

After these rites, the musical portion of the evening begins and does not cease until the early morning hours. Back at the carpeted living room dance floor, guests are starting to congregate as DJ Clement plays an upbeat highlife song for the bride and groom's first dance. The couple dances face to face with their elbows bent, shoulders pliant, and hips winding subtly to the highlife rhythm. During the break in the song, Janice turns and backs into her groom, accentuating the rhythms with her hips and grinding her rear towards his abdomen. Nana's wife (who played the part of the groom's mother at the awaregye) goes onto the dance floor, grabs a leather jacket from a man, and waves it in the air around the dancing couple, as

one would wave a piece of cloth or handkerchief towards dancers in West Africa. Other ladies join them on the dance floor and the floor quickly fills up with dancers, some in couples, some in small groups, and most of them migrating around the dance floor periodically trading partners.

Next, the DJ exclaims in the microphone that the next song is a money song and that people must shower the bride and groom with money in order to dance with them. For this he chooses a makossa song followed by a highlife song. As the bride and groom start to dance, the DJ talks over the songs to prompt people to come and give money to dance with them. "Spoil them with money … Show your love …Your support … Represent." People come forward and fling dollar bills towards the bride's forehead, while some get more intimate and stuff bills down the front of her wedding dress. The scene plays like a modern rendition of a praise song adapted to the western wedding reception environment. It gets very lively, with several people tossing money at her or putting it down her dress and dancing all around her. By now the floor is crowded with people dancing. For the duration of the evening, the DJ strategically alternates makossa and highlife, giving equal time to each family's regional identity and never stepping outside of those genres, which I found striking. Later, I asked the DJ how he chose the songs to play at the reception.

> *DJ Clement*: When I was growing up in Yaoundé, the capital of Cameroon, I grew up in an environment where people spoke French, although my background was English-speaking and I had to open up my mind to embrace many different cultures. It came along with Spanish music, Caribbean, reggae, highlife. So I already have a very broad background. I can easily adapt myself to any type of music. I don't care if

the music is from Russia or Norway, once you tell me I am playing a party, I will go out there to record stores, listen to albums, know the songs, know the rhythms, I study. In order to play Ghanaian music, I had to go out and try to find what they like.

Canon: How did you do the research?

DJ Clement: I went to record stores, to Ghanaian stores. I talked to a few of my friends from Ghana. I said I need to know the music that is hot. Some of them didn't give me any good names, but I had to find out by myself.

Canon: What stores did you go to?

DJ Clement: African Produce Market and Obichi Market. I collect the music, take them home and play them and then I can pinpoint the various hot spots that they want, then I extract, just like the Senegalese party. Most of the time, since I don't understand the lyrics, I go to the moving point, the action point in songs. Most African music have a moving point that tells you, it's time for you to get up and dance, so often I'll have to screen and go all the way inside and pinpoint that spot, and put it out through the speakers, they'll be jumping where I asked them to jump.

Canon: How does music and dance help people adapt to being in LA?

DJ Clement: Basically, from my own point of view, music to a Senegalese or Ghanaian makes any African feel at home, because behind the music, there's a message and sometimes even though we're far away from home, music will comfort us and make us feel like we are at home. The only time we feel that we're not at home is when we're leaving the hall where the music was taking place. And for you to feel at home, even if you're renting an apartment, if you have music playing, makes you not to forget where you're from. Because let's say, our great-grandparents before they died, most of the artists are played, they're just basically carrying on the message they left for them, because there won't be any happiness if there's no music. Even right now, as I get into the car, I have to turn on African music to make my day go well. Because there's a lot of stress in this community, work stress, traffic stress, lot of things. So for you to feel good, to be happy, if you're happy you tend to forget about a lot of things. Music for an African is very important. It makes you feel at home. It's

> comforting. If there's a place where an African can go and identify themselves once in a while, once a week, as a group, like the club we used to have, Bamboo. Even though they closed the club, people are still crying, I asked them, why did you like Bamboo too much? They say, man, when I was there, it was like I was home in Africa. Once they come there, they identify themselves like they are at home and they are welcome and they don't feel like strangers.

DJ Clement's comments about the role of music at African wedding receptions have been echoed by many other West African immigrants in the community in terms of the importance of choosing music that represents the guests' regional, national, or ethnic identity. The data I have collected suggests that the music chosen at African immigrant wedding receptions follows different criteria than other lifecycle family ceremonies. First of all, in choosing which songs and genres of music to include at the wedding reception, the bride and groom have the initial task of deciding which songs, artists, and genres they would like the DJ to play. Secondly, the DJ has the prerogative to mix in songs and artists of his own choosing to accommodate the many hours of dancing. If the DJ recognizes that some of the guests are from a particular area or country, he will also play songs to represent them. The goal of the music is to provide a nostalgic engagement for each person present, but particularly for those in the wedding party. Thus at the Ghanaian and Cameroonian wedding reception, the DJ alternated between highlife and makossa for the entire evening to equally represent the family members and provide a nostalgic experience for each side. A DJ may also attempt to create nostalgia by choosing songs from particular time periods which represent different age groups. For example, older Ghanaians more fully appreciate older highlife songs from the dance band era of the 1940s and 50s, while the younger generation

often responds to the trendier hiplife style (a westernized combination of highlife and hip hop). Likewise, at a Nigerian wedding reception I attended in Houston in 1999 between an Igbo bride and Esan groom, the DJ played songs by Chief Stephen Osita Osadebe to represent the bride's side of Igboland and songs by Victor Owaifo for the groom's side in Esan. He, too, explained to me that the DJ's task when choosing songs is to create an intensely nostalgic experience by channeling a regional and ethnic identity through the music (Canon 2000).

Thoughts

Although weddings represent the union of families and the expansion of familial alliances, weddings in the African immigrant Diaspora inherently result in a fragmentation of families, leaving families disjointed. When I asked a group of Ghanaians to describe the most difficult aspect of performing their weddings in Southern California, they agreed that the most difficult thing was not having all of their family members present at the wedding, because of the high cost of travel and difficulty of attaining visas. The disjuncture of families results in the performance of different ritual or celebratory activities transnationally, in different locations across the globe. For instance, family members in Ghana and Senegal typically perform a number of aspects of the wedding ritual in Africa in the absence of the bride and groom and then contact the couple to alert them of the completion of the formalities. This is particularly true with the negotiation of bridewealth payments, because as I noted above, the generation of Africans who have emigrated to the U.S. during the most recent wave of migration typically have parents still living in Africa, with whom the

responsibility for the dowry negotiation rests. In Muslim West African cultures, it is also typical for parents to perform the religious wedding ceremony in the mosque in the absence of the bride and groom and then call the couple to tell them when they are married. After receiving word that the marriage is official, the bride is free to host a reception among her friends and relations in the U.S.

On the other hand, African immigrants perform certain aspects of the wedding rituals in Southern California in the absence of family members who remain in Africa. Recall that Ghanaian Christian immigrants conceive of three different ritualistic activities which make up the wedding proper – the traditional ceremony, which includes the negotiation of the dowry, the Christian marriage ceremony held in the church or in the home, and the civil service or procurement of the marriage license. In many Ghanaian cultures, the traditional bridewealth ceremony also serves as the official wedding ceremony, but among Ghanaian Christians who prefer to have a church wedding, the dowry transaction is referred to as "the engagement." Thus, many Ghanaian immigrants perform only the Christian wedding (what many refer to as the "white wedding") after their parents have completed the dowry transaction in their absence. Following the wedding ceremony, families host a western-style reception that features music, dancing, dining, and socializing among the families, their guests, and association members. The description of the traditional Asante wedding in this chapter includes both the traditional and the religious wedding ceremonies, in addition to the western-style reception. Since the groom's family was from a different culture, the bride's family recruited representatives to stand in for the groom's side of the family. The use of stand-ins or representatives is, in fact, a long-standing strategy in Africa for performing

traditional ceremonies in the absence of key players. Thus, by using stand-ins, some African immigrants reproduce traditionally sanctioned practices in their performance of family rituals in the Diaspora rather than assimilating wholesale into the dominant cultural practices.

A Senegalese (Wolof) Wedding Party in Los Angeles

In June of 2003, a Wolof woman celebrates her recent marriage by hosting a *yendu* (lit., "spending the day") for her female friends and family members in her apartment in the mid-Wilshire area of Los Angeles. A yendu is a Wolof party that takes place after the marriage ceremony, which in Senegal, is held in the mosque and attended only by male members of both sides of the family. The yendu, considered *aféer-u jigeen* (the business of women), allows women an opportunity to relax, socialize, give advice concerning marriage, and dance intimately with other women in their age group. In addition to the yendu, it has also become fashionable for Senegalese families to host a western-style reception in a hotel ballroom or reception hall. The difference between the two types of post-wedding celebrations rests primarily with cultural content and style. Essentially, the yendu is more traditional in scope and style, with women wearing *grand boubous* (long, wide dress), *abaya* (lace dress), *ndocket* (top and skirt), and other traditional styles of dress, eating traditional foods prepared by the female family members, and dancing to *mbalax* and *sabar* music. The western-style reception, on the other hand, exudes an obviously European or American tone. Attended by both women and men, guests opt for western-style dresses and suits as opposed to grand boubous, and the bride may even wear a white wedding gown. Similarly, though, guests spend much of the reception dancing to mbalax music provided by a DJ.

This particular yendu in Los Angeles is reprsentative of the transnational strategies by Senegelese Mouride families, in that, it is disjoined from the other ceremonial aspects of the wedding and it is performed in the absence of a key player, namely the groom. The negotiation of the dowry and the Muslim wedding ceremony have already been performed by the families in Senegal in the absence of the bride and groom. The groom, who is a Mouride trader, works a global circuit of buying and selling products between Dakar, Europe, and North America, and at the time of the reception, is still in Senegal. Typically, though, the arrangement of Senegalese marriage works in the reverse, with the groom setting up a business and a home in the States and then sending for his bride to come and join him.

I obtained a videotape of the yendu from Ismaila Baby, a Senegalese immigrant who videotapes many Senegalese family ceremonies. His filming and editing styles reveal a number of aspects that are culturally salient to Senegalese immigrants in L.A., therefore I have found it cogent to read the video as a text to better understand the identity politics at play during the wedding party. The opening segment of the video, accompanied by mbalax music, has credits to announce the name, location, and date of the wedding ceremony and then cuts to skyscrapers in downtown Los Angeles and the Hollywood sign, which together, establish the location. These images are significant for different reasons. The buildings downtown not only represent modern, urban Los Angeles, but they represent the location at which the majority of Senegalese Mouride immigrants work as merchants selling luxury items such as watches, handbags, sunglasses, and hats. The Hollywood sign, which is perched on a hill in Beachwood Canyon, serves as a symbol for Los Angeles, and its placement in the opening of the video adds an air of status and prestige to the celebration.

As the mbalax soundtrack continues, a montage features extreme close-ups of the bride's facial features and jewelry, alternating between close-ups of an eye, thick with black eyeliner and blue and bronze cream eyeshadow, her lips covered in shimmery bronze lipstick, her large gold chandelier earring, and a gold and diamond rectangular pendant. Then her full face appears along with an inset of a photograph of the groom's face next to hers. (Recall that the groom is not in the country at the time of the celebration.) The video cuts away to a full-screen image of *churai*, a pasty dark brown herb or resin used as an aphrodisiac among Senegalese women. Then the frame is filled with a close-up of yellow and black glass beads. The camera pans around the bedroom, focusing on the large bed with a mirrored headboard, perfume jars on a mirrored dresser, a stereo and television, and a framed picture of the groom on the bedside table. Then it cuts back to the churai and alternating images of glass beads in yellow, black, red, green, and gold. This montage signifies a promise of sexual activity in the marriage. The beads are an item that Senegalese women wear around their hips beneath their clothing. As a special aphrodisiac when going out in mixed company, women soak the beads in the *churai*, whose deeply sweet, pungent odor is believed to be a sexual turn-on for men. With the beads barely visible under their dresses, the incense wafts around them. The beads also have a percussive feature which "click-ti-click" when they walk or dance, adding to the sexual interest.

The bride and her female attendants stroll up the apartment hallway accompanied by another mbalax song. The bride shimmers in a boubou of white embroidered lace and silver sequins over a silver sparkling top and skirt peeking beneath the lace. Her hair is done in a sleek up-do with side-swept bangs. Her attendants are also dressed to the nines in colorful

boubous and ndocket meticulously coordinated and accessorized with gold and silver jewelry, handbags, and shoes. As the bride enters the living room of the small apartment, she greets a few women who are seated against the walls, shaking hands with them from left to right. The chairs and sofas have been pushed against the walls to create optimum space for dancing. Persian and Asian style rugs cover the carpeted floor of the narrow living room. A large framed picture of Cheikh Amadou Bamba hangs on the wall beside the entertainment system which holds the TV, VCR, stereo, and speakers. A photograph of the bride has been hung temporarily nearby. The bride sweeps through the room and approaches several women who are dancing in the center of the room to the mbalax song, "Labat" by Fatou Laobe, in which the singer entreats her lover to ask for her hand in marriage. The elegantly dressed women surround the bride and dance around her as they smile broadly and clap to the regular pulses of the music. She embraces her friends and kisses their cheeks four times: right, left, right, left, and dances with them. Swaying from side to side around the bride, the women clutch and gather up the fronts of their dresses, working them up and down gently or circularly or swooping an arm up to one side and back. The style of dancing, called *ndaga*, is characterized by swaying from side to side to the pulse beats of the song and gently working the arms forward and back. Each woman in turn comes forward and dances a solo dance with the guest of honor. As the bride thrusts her hips inwards and outwards with bent knees, she clutches the bottom front of her blouse and lifts it, with elbows out, exposing a bit of midriff. The other women smile, laugh, and dance demurely around her with an air of friendly intimacy.

The video of the yendu then features another lengthy montage of close-ups of the bride's sparkling lace dress fabric, her bronze lips, her eyes, and her hands, which are bedecked with several huge diamond and gold rings and stacks of gold bracelets on each wrist. The camera clings to shots of each piece of jewelry, each facial feature, each sparkling object of desire.

Next, the food is served and most of the women sit closely together and eat from paper plates. Meanwhile, with the music cranked high, conversations are limited and the dancing continues as the mbalax songs keep coming one after another, not by a DJ, but by the host and her friends playing CDs on the home stereo. The women form small circles and flirtatiously show off their well-honed dance moves for one another. Dancing closely, they fill the small space of the living room with the expansive yardage of their garments through grand arm gestures, twirling, and bending. Yet they never seem cramped. During a percussive break in one song, a woman performs the more intense and acrobatic ballet-style of dancing. With her knees out and her body bent slightly forward at the waist, her limb movements become much bigger and faster. Then she retreats to the circle and continues swaying and clapping with the others. An older woman comes forward and exhibits her own flashy ballet-style. As each woman takes her turn dancing solo during the drum break sections, she grinds her bent knees in and out, as her bottom and hips thrust outward and inward, and the look on her face resembles a look of bliss, with wide eyes demurely looking up and away. This type of blissful facial expression is a characteristic of mbalax and sabar dancing. As one Senegalese woman expressed, "It's the whole mannerisms. It's like the face is dancing as well" (23 March 2004, personal communication). Each woman in the circle

takes a turn coming forward to dance for a few seconds and then retreats and continues clapping to the pulses of the song. As each woman takes her turn dancing in the center of the circle, the camera zooms in on her behind.

Throughout the ceremony, the dancing gradually becomes more suggestive and less inhibited among the women, eventually taking on a quality of sexual parody and flirtatious play. During the drum breaks in the songs, the women choreograph their hip movements to correspond precisely with the rhythmic phrases of the drum language. They bump and jut their hips and buttocks to each accent and then end the phrase with a jolting thrust, exhibiting a keen cultural knowledge of the music by coordinating their hips and derriere movements to the tama and sabar linguistic phrases that comprise the breaks in the songs, effectively "playing" the drum rhythms with their bodies. During one of these breaks, two women are dancing face to face, winding their hips and lifting their long tops to reveal the skirts underneath. Another lady comes up behind one of them and bumps into her bottom with her abdomen, in and out to the beat of the rhythmic drum phrase. Precisely at the strong accent of the last beat of the drum phrase, the woman in front thrusts her bottom into her "partner" and her partner accepts the force of the bump and falls backward. The ladies laugh, shout, and "whoop" with approval and continue dancing together. A simple reading of this interchange would suggest that the women are performing a musical parody of a sex act, in which the lady from behind is playing the role of the man while the percussive phrase provides direction for their theatrically sexual moves. However, it is the dancer playing the part of the woman who has the final say at the end of the percussive phrase by bumping her body into her partner's, acting as the sexual aggressor. As stated in chapter three, it has been argued that

Wolof women's dancing at family ceremonies allows women to negotiate the boundaries of gender, sexuality, and power.

Dowry, Jewelry, and Promises

The bride once again puts on the song, "Labat," by Fatou Laobe, in which the singer entreats her lover to ask for her hand in marriage. The title is an older Wolof term which literally means, "Come ask for my hand." As the electric guitar and sabar drum introduction begins, the bride picks a framed photograph of her new husband off the shelf and holds it towards the video camera, as several other women quickly gather around her. While they sway to the music and sing along with the lyrics, the women giggle and gesture towards the framed picture. In the song, Fatou Laobe makes her case as to why she will make a good wife: "I will cook and fetch water for your mom. I will cook your favorite dishes. Come ask my dad for my hand so I can be your wife." Then she admits, "Sometimes we're together and we get along perfectly, but sometimes we start arguing." Then she cites a well-known African aphorism, addressing the men, "Next time your wife does you wrong, remember you come from a woman." Several women take turns dancing with the groom's picture one at a time, flirting and pointing their fingers towards his face with looks of love, each one pretending for a moment that he is her man. The ladies pose and dance around with the photo for the entire length of the song. During the refrain they sing out the lyric, "Mon cheri, mon cheri, yow rek leu (you're the only one), I love you" to the camera.

After seeing the music video for the song "Labat," I was struck by the similarity of the music video to the bride and her age-mates' performance and I indulged in a bit of

speculation as to whether their dancing longingly with the groom's photo may have directly signified the music video. In the video for "Labat" by Fatou Laobe, a well-dressed man and woman are shaking hands with a man in a blue boubou, surrounded by guests in a modern Senegalese living room. The room is decorated much like the living room where the women are celebrating the yendu in Los Angeles, with a carpeted floor covered by an Asian style rug, a large brass entertainment center housing a TV, stereo, and speakers, a framed picture of Cheikh Amadou Bamba on the wall over the stereo, a sofa against the wall, a leather ottoman, and a large shelving unit filled with knick-knacks and framed photographs. As Fatou Laobe sings, the video quickly cross-cuts between the singer in different locations wearing about five different outfits of elegant colorful boubous and ndocket and heaps of gold jewelry. In some scenes she is flanked by three female dancers wearing cropped tops and wrap skirts and in other scenes, by two male dancers wearing western-style suits. Some of the cuts feature only the female dancers in red cropped tops, tight pants, and silver hip beads, or only the male dancers dancing outside in the courtyard. In one scene, the groom-to-be and the other man are pulling necklaces from a red box and trying them on the singer, who is dressed in a bright blue damask dress and loaded down with gold necklaces, bracelets, earrings, and rings. We see by the wall of necklaces displayed in glass cases that they are in a jewelry store. After trying on several necklaces and rings, the man calculates the total and the groom writes a check. Back in the living room, guests are drinking champagne. As Fatou Laobe sings and dances, a henna design is visible on her hand, another indication that she is getting married. Singing in front of the shelving unit, Fatou Laobe points to a framed picture of a man and sings the refrain, "Mon cheri, mon cheri, yow rek leu, I love you."

The video for "Labat" is indicative of the complex process of dowry negotiation among contemporary Senegalese families. Beth Buggenhagen's analysis of Mouride households explores ways in which the Mouride-dominated transnational trade network has fundamentally transformed the relationship between bridewealth, prosperity, and domestic authority in Senegalese cities and villages. "In Murid families, the rejuvenation of domestic rituals through access to male earnings abroad sets in motion the production of women-headed households and ultimately of lineages" (Buggenhagen 2001:373). While family rituals such as baptisms, weddings, and funerals were once significant facilitators of male lineage and familial alliances, a shift has occurred during the last ten years as a result of the growing Mouride trade circuits and the absence of men in the domestic sphere. According to Buggenhagen, the result is an increasing shift towards women's displays and exchanges of wealth during family ceremonies. With a surplus of cash, women have escalated their system of ritual gift-giving at family ceremonies to a dangerous degree, resulting in a growing debt and credit system among urban women. Also, in the absence of young males, the advancement of senior women to the role of head of household has presented elder women with the power to affect changing trends in contracting marriages and negotiating and distributing bridewealth (2001:375).

To illustrate, Buggenhagen describes the details of a bridewealth transaction, which took place over the span of a year in 1999 between a Mouride trader and a *commerçant* family in Dakar, which unfortunately resulted in a hastily failed marriage when the young bride ran away and refused to live with her husband. Since the bridewealth payment, which included large sums of cash, housewares, jewelry, cloth, and other items, had already been

accepted and distributed by the elder women among a number of family members, the failed marriage created anxiety over accrued bridewealth debt which had to be recovered, as well as anxiety over the subsequently dissolved family alliances and social relations. How did the system break down? Buggenhagen points to a few specific changes in bridewealth negotiations which are directly related to the changing system of social relations inherent in the Mouride diasporic system of cash appropriation. The main change involves the increasing dominance of cash and commercial luxury items such as jewelry replacing other traditional and household items as the key bridewealth payments. Related to this are changing attitudes about cash and luxury items and shifting power relations in dealing with these items according to gender and generation.

For example, in Buggenhagen's ethnography, the Mouride disciple, who was living in Italy, decided to take a second wife and establish an additional household in Dakar. The girl he chose for a second wife was his first wife's cousin and actually regarded as her "sister" because they grew up together in the same house. The girl, 23 years old, who herself had expected to be this man's first bride, was offended by his attempt to bring her in as a junior wife and made many attempts to snub his offer of marriage. But her aunt and uncle accepted his initial offer of two kilos of kola nuts, known as "the greeting" (*nuyoo*), and thus, agreed to the marriage. The man then sent the girl a gift of cash along with a gold necklace and bracelet, which she accepted. The acceptance of this type of gift, recognized by older generations as the *ndaq far*, or "the gift that chases away other suitors" indicates that the woman agrees to the proposal and thus enters the "engagement" stage (A.B. Diop 1985:103 cited in Buggenhagen 2001:387). However, rather than acknowledging his gift as the ndaq

far, she and her age-mates irreverently referred to the items as *may gu jekk*, or "first gift," meaning that she expected additional gifts of cash and jewelry from her suitor before finalizing her decision. "The increasing use of this term by junior women signals a significant change in the nature of social relations. It suggests that the first gift is not in itself a symbol of acceptance and obligation but rather a competitive bid for the potential marriage, which may or may not ever take place" (Buggenhagen 2001:387-88).

Looking back to the women at the yendu in Los Angeles, it is safe to assume that they are familiar with the Fatou Loabe music video since it is currently popular in Senegal and also available on DVD compilations in the U.S. Assuming that the women are familiar with the video, it is possible that their performance of singing along with the lyrics and holding and pointing to the framed picture of the groom indicates that the women are acting out the part of the bride in the video's storyline and using the absent groom's picture to fill the part of the groom. The fact that Fatou Loabe points to the man's picture near the end of the video gives further evidence that they may be referencing the music video in their own performance for their personal video director, the man videotaping the yendu.

Therefore, I suggest that by dancing and singing the part of the bride in the video, the women are participating in a musical social commentary on the modern process of courting and bridewealth transactions, which have transformed remarkably during the past ten years. The music and, as an extension, the music video, facilitate this performed commentary by creating the imagery necessary for them to play out the scenario of women being seduced with wealth and luxury. Beyond the imaginary, the women are presenting themselves as vivid examples of the success of the Mouride way by flaunting their beautiful attire, rich fabrics,

elegant hairstyles, myriad gold accessories, and a modern, well-appointed Los Angeles apartment. The video of the yendu itself, which will be circulated throughout households in the extended family's transnational circuit, will become a status symbol itself, a product of cultural capital that will increase the investment of the family's son's travels and business savvy.

After a long period of dancing, the bride has changed outfits into a sheer, sparkling aqua blouse over a silver top and skirt and the ladies have gathered in a large circle to give their testimonies and advice on her new status as a wife. Seated around the perimeter of the room, they pass around a microphone and speak one at a time into the camera in Wolof with some French. After many of them have spoken, the bride gives a speech, while the others look on quietly. Many of the women express that they have not yet met the groom and that they look forward to meeting him when he comes to visit L.A.

Conclusion

African weddings represent not only the union of two consenting adults, but the expansion of an extended family network and accompanying familial alliances. As with naming ceremonies, Africans distinguish between the "religious" and the "traditional" aspects in the performance of wedding ceremonies. While the religious segment adheres to Christian or Muslim tradition, including being officiated by a religious leader and following the sanctioned codes of musical performance or the lack thereof, the traditional segments of the wedding are rooted in the kinship structure and reinforce and regenerate traditional cultural identities. The traditional aspects include the customary activities that occur before the

religious wedding service, such as the formal declaration of intent to marry and the negotiation of the dowry. Traditional aspects also include the celebratory activities that follow the religious service, which involve dancing to popular African music, eating, socializing, and gift-giving.

Traditionally, there are no genres of music or dance associated with the wedding ritual proper in either Senegalese or Ghanaian cultures. The main reason is that the traditional wedding ritual involves the formal presentation and acceptance of the dowry between the bride and groom's family members and is not traditionally accompanied by music. The second reason is that the religious wedding ceremony as it is practiced in Africa today is not indigenous to African society, but is rooted in Muslim and Christian practices and appropriated by African Muslims and Christians. Therefore, the music, or absence thereof, at religious wedding ceremonies is influenced by Muslim and Christian ideals. In African Muslim wedding ceremonies, there is no music during the ceremony in adherence to Islam's prohibition of singing or playing instruments in the mosque. At Christian wedding ceremonies, however, music is often a central and significant feature, serving as a framing device to the ritual proceedings and reinforcing the thematic character of the ceremony. This reflects the ongoing process through which African Christians have appropriated traditional rites into a Christian setting and vice versa.

While the use of music and dancing during African immigrant weddings differs significantly according to people’s religious orientation, it is common for both Ghanaian and Senegalese immigrants to host a reception after the religious wedding that centers on music and dancing. Ghanaians tend to favor a western-style reception at which the bride wears a

wedding dress and the groom wears a tuxedo or suit. Senegalese differentiate between the traditional get-togethers such as the yendu (literally, “spending the day”) and the western-style party, which they refer to simply as the “reception.” Among Senegalese immigrants, the yendu may be the primary choice over the western-style reception. A Senegalese college student related to me that most Senegalese in Los Angeles prefer the yendu to the western reception because, in her words, "It doesn't really make sense to do the reception here. I just don't see the point here. I think that when you're here, you're so yearning for your culture" (23 March 2004, personal communication).

The choice of music at wedding receptions is popular dance music from the home areas of the members of the wedding party. For Senegalese, this involves an evening filled with mbalax music, with an occasional dose of Senegalese salsa by Africando. On the other hand, Ghanaians express their national identity through dancing to highlife music, which is updated with the occasional hiplife song. DJs are the primary "musicians" at wedding receptions, although a family might occasionally hire an African dance band to perform at a reception, but this seems rare. All those I have interviewed have hired DJs or have played their own selection of CDs and tapes at their wedding receptions. And because of the predominance of DJs over live bands at African ceremonies, a certain antagonism exists between African immigrant musicians and the DJs who seem to get all the work at ceremonies including wedding receptions, anniversaries, graduation ceremonies, birthdays, housewarming parties, student organizations, African association parties, independence day parties, and some nightclubs.

Musicians complain that, in general, people hosting the parties are not willing to pay the price for a band and would rather save money by hiring a DJ. They are also of the opinion that by replacing live music with recorded music in ritual contexts, African immigrants are denying an important part of their cultural heritage. However, African immigrant DJs uphold that they are able to play a variety of musical styles appropriate to the occasion, whereas a band which specializes in a particular style of music such as highlife cannot vary their performance to suit other tastes or identities. DJs argue that since their musical selections include the original tunes sung by the original artists, the guests have a potentially more nostalgic engagement with the music. As DJ Clement expressed to me, "I think getting a DJ is advantageous because they have some old collections that will even wake the older folks and get them out to dance. They will play some stuff from way back in the 60s that was recorded originally and the older folks identify themselves more and they are going to think back of their old school days" (25 April 2003, personal communication).

For this reason, DJs actually help to fulfill music's most prominent role at wedding receptions, which is to prompt a national or regional identity, by playing popular songs from the participants' home areas. In planning and preparing for a reception, the bride and groom specify to the DJ which songs and artists they would like the DJ to play, keeping in mind who is expected to attend. The musical selections are meant to produce a sensation of nostalgia and regional identity for the guests through listening, but especially through dancing. In addition to the songs requested by the couple, DJs use their musical expertise to select songs that will most effectively elicit nostalgic sentiments of those in attendance and inspire them to dance. If the bride and groom are from different cultures, the DJ plays songs

from each of their families' home areas or countries. For example, at the Ghanaian and Cameroonian wedding reception, the DJ alternated between highlife and makossa to equally represent the family members and provide a nostalgic experience for each side. During the reception, guests can also affect the song selection by requesting songs with which they have a personal attachment or which remind them of home.

At the Senegalese yendu, the selection of music for dancing also prompts a national identity, but is more prominently experienced as a gender-defined activity, as the yendu is considered aféer-u jigeen, or the business of women. In contrast to the nostalgic engagement of music among Ghanaians, the Senegalese women's choices of music and styles of dancing reflect their cultural knowledge of the latest mbalax hit songs and the particular dance movements which accompany each song. In Senegal, commercially popular songs are accompanied by particular dance movements which quickly spread across Dakar and surrounding areas. Family ceremonies such as baptisms and weddings provide contexts for women to demonstrate their mastery of the latest dance styles. Secondly, as the women's dancing movements become more and more suggestive and sexually-parodic throughout the celebration, it suggests that Senegalese immigrant women are negotiating the boundaries of power and gender through performing suggestive dance moves (Buggenhagen, Heath, Irvine).

Third, the Senegalese women continue to use family ceremonies in the Diaspora as an arena for displaying wealth and demonstrating their beauty and feminine grace, which are conceptualized as forms of baraka (salvation). Therefore, music and dance at Senegalese immigrant wedding receptions plays a key role in allowing Senegalese women to

demonstrate their reproduction of important Wolof characteristics such as “sanse,” or the art of personal style, and kersa (honor), important Mouride aspects such as feminine grace and deference to the Cheikh through song, as well as their adaptation to the American social terrain exemplified through displays of wealth and modern living. All these crucial concepts to Wolof identity are captured on the audio-visual media of videotapes, which circulate around the immigrant Diaspora and back to Senegal, and help raise the prestige and status of the family.

Chapter Six

Funerals

Funerals as Transnational Events

More than any other lifecycle event, funerals represent the most fundamental differences in cultural practice between Ghanaian and Senegalese immigrants. The differences are grounded in the ways in which funerals are conceptualized and performed in their home countries. While Senegalese funerals are devoid of music and dance, given the Islamic context, Ghanaian funerals are saturated with music and dance and actually depend on them for ritual efficacy. This chapter will explore the ways in which Ghanaian and Senegalese immigrants deal with death ritually, culturally, spiritually, financially, and musically. The discussion and ethnographic examples will draw out the concept that funerals constitute a transnational experience for Africans at home and abroad.

African immigrants in the Diaspora have become integral players in the performance of funerals in their home countries primarily by contributing remittances to help fund funeral rituals (see Valentina Mazzucato, Mirjam Kabki, and Lothar Smith 2004, Marleen de Witte 2001, K. Arhin 1994). A recent study by a group of scholars from the Netherlands confirms that, "[Ghanaian] families with migrants overseas generally organize larger and more lavish funerals than those families without a migrant" (Mazzucato, Kabki, and Smith 2004). As I

discussed in chapter three, the national, ethnic, and hometown associations in the immigrant Diaspora are fundamental in garnering the funds necessary to send a deceased's body back to Africa for burial, for funding a funeral in the U.S., and for collecting funds for family funerals in their home countries.

But beyond the financial flows, African immigrants have helped transform the contemporary West African funeral into a transnational event by performing certain segments of the funeral in multiple locations across the Diaspora. These multi-sited events are often considered status events themselves. As it becomes more fashionable to videotape lifecycle rituals, the videotaped images of these events circulate around the Diaspora and add further prestige to an extended family. My ethnographic evidence from Akan immigrant funeral ceremonies in Los Angeles will integrate the issue of remittances with the circulation of videotaped images and also recognize the cultural dynamics of musical performance in this transnational process.

Secondly, the chapter will focus on a particular issue in Ghanaian funeral practice, which concerns the negotiation between Christian faith and traditional rites, including traditional music and dance, during the performance of transnational funerals. In contemporary Christian funerals, both in Ghana and in the Diaspora, families creatively adapt the performance elements to either assert the value of one practice over the other, or alternate them in such as way as to give voice to both their traditional music and dance forms and Christian-based performances. Some Christians avoid traditional rites that are historically central to the funeral such as pouring libations of local palm gin (*akpeteshi*) or Schnapps because of its implications of fetishism. Others continue the rite of pouring libations, but

keep it discreetly separate from the Christian-based segments of the ritual. The same holds true for certain traditional music and dance practices.

For example, at a recent funeral in Accra for the mother of a Fante immigrant of Los Angeles, the family seamlessly juggled Christian-based music performances with deeply traditional Akan music and dance. At the wake keeping, the pastor and church members sang hymns in Twi from Methodist songbooks over the body as it laid in state (see photo). Afterwards, an *asafo* hornblower and drummer played an homage over the body, using their instruments as speech surrogates (see photo). This traditional practice requires pouring a libation to the ancestors. Immediately following the burial service, a *kete* drum and dance ensemble played traditional kete music, while guests danced and processed in with their donations (*nnsowa*) (see photo). The same funeral event featured performances by a children's church choir, a church keyboardist, and CDs of popular gospel and highlife. According to the daughter of the deceased, the devout Christian family drew the line at having asafo drummers and singers perform at the funeral, because the asafo groups represent and practice a deeper, more fetishistic aspect of traditional music and rites, such as animal sacrifice and pouring libations. She said, "There's too much blood in that. It's like idol worship. We don't get involved in that" (17 February 2005, personal communication). This exchange exemplifies some of the negotiations that actively takes place between traditional music and rites on one hand and Christian beliefs and practices on the other.

In Ghana, the funeral has developed into the most elaborate and expensive lifecycle ceremony in society. The culmination of weeks or even months of preparation, a funeral consists of a weekend long series of ritual events, the product of thousands of dollars spent

towards the mortuary costs, transportation, décor, musical performances, gifts for the family, religious services, traditional cultural rites, and public celebrations which are attended by hundreds or even thousands of guests. Funerals take place every weekend in Ghana and are large public attractions, judged for their opulence and entertainment value. For a family, a "good" funeral is an indicator of a family's wealth and status in the eyes of the community (De Witte 2003). The intense competition to vie for the community's approval has recently prompted a public debate surrounding the exorbitant expenses that families sink into their funeral rituals. As one Ghanaian woman in Los Angeles told me, "When the person is alive, you hardly pay attention to them, but when they die, they become a celebrity!" (17 February 2005, personal communication). In this context, Ghanaian immigrants abroad are in a position to contribute greatly to a family's status and prestige during funerals, both financially, because of the strong exchange rate of the dollar, and culturally, by bringing an air of First World modernity to the ritual.

The Senegalese funeral, in stark contrast, is a low-key and somber event which has no celebratory or musical components. Approached within an overriding Muslim framework by the great majority of Senegalese in Senegal and the Diaspora, the funeral itself is brief and understated. According to Islamic prescription, the body of a deceased person is buried as soon as possible, typically within a few hours of death. Subsequently, Senegalese immigrants in Los Angeles are rarely able to attend the actual funeral rites of loved ones in Senegal. However, they are able to participate in the formal gatherings at which friends, family, and community members console the bereaved and donate money for the funeral expenses. The fundraising aspect is private and discreet and accomplished through personal visitations. Two

days after the burial, there is a social gathering at which people give a funeral donation, called *sarakh* in Wolof. Visitations have a somber mood and never include music or celebration. The women cover their heads and men wear traditional clothing. Seven days after the death, there is another social gathering to recognize the seven day anniversary of death at which another sarakh is collected. Again, there is a somber mood, with no music or celebration.

Perhaps more than any other lifecycle event, funerals accentuate and tug on the family ties which connect people across the Atlantic. The loss of a loved one instigates a shift in family dynamics and calls into play a host of family responsibilities. Immigrants are often expected to travel home and take on certain duties in the planning and production of a funeral, which for Ghanaians involves a string of ritual activities including the wakekeeping, religious services, burial service, and public celebrations, known as the final funeral rites, which feature several types of popular and traditional music for dancing. Additionally, there are compulsory activities after a funeral which foreground people's social responsibilities in the family and the community. In Akan culture, the day immediately following a funeral, the family goes around town personally thanking guests for their donations. Later, there is a fortieth-day celebration (*adaduanan*), at which an heir is chosen. After forty days, the deceased's spirit is believed to have left the general vicinity of the living. At this point, a successor is chosen to replace the person and take his or her role and duties in the extended family, such as head of household or caretaker of the person's children. On certain occasions, an immigrant is named as successor and must assume the duties of that role, which may include moving back to Ghana. One example of this involves an Akan immigrant in New

Jersey who was named successor to his brother, who had been the chief of Ghana's Eastern Region. The man was chosen by his family to move back to Ghana and assume the role and duties of Okyenhene. This same chief recently visited Los Angeles to help fundraise for a charity that sends free wheelchairs to disabled people in Africa. During his visit, he was celebrated by the Ghanaian community with a radio interview and several parties in his honor (see chapter three). Lastly, one year after a funeral, Akans perform a one-year celebration (*afehyiada*) to see off the deceased into the ancestor realm and unveil the tomb, which has been purchased by the children of the deceased with the donations. This occasion also features traditional and religious rites as well as music and dance.

Funerals in the Diaspora

The incredible expanse across the Atlantic can seem even more distant when the news arrives about the death of a family member or friend. With the far and wide transmigration of Africans around the world, a funeral can be a powerful means of reuniting families. Funerals bring people home, both socially and spiritually. The rituals provide closure for a family's agony, and they do so in culturally appropriate ways. While for Ghanaian Christians (and most Ghanaian Muslims), dancing is considered an appropriate display of mourning and show of respect for the deceased and for the surviving family members, dancing would be an entirely inappropriate display at a funeral among Senegalese Muslims. Performance and meaning during funerals are situated at both a spiritual level, in terms of religious beliefs and cosmology, and at a social and cultural level, in terms of kinship structures, social status, cultural expression, and identity. At Ghanaian funerals,

music and dance have two main streams of influence, spiritual and social. At the spiritual level, the poetics in the music express respect for death and for the deceased. Dancing to the music during a burial rite, at final funeral rites, and at post-funeral celebrations is a way for mourners to "see off" the dead, to assist them in their journey to the realm of the ancestors. At the social level, dancing shows respect and gratitude to the surviving family members for their efforts. Also, the music provided by the family contributes to the entertainment value of the funeral, helping to increase the display of wealth and status of the entire family. As Marleen de Witte has said of Asante funerals, "Within the framing narrative of respect for the dead and guiding the spirit to the next world, funerals are much about life" (De Witte 2003:531).

To interpret the performance practices during Ghanaian and Senegalese funerals in the Diaspora, I will distinguish between two different scenarios. The first concerns the series of events when an African immigrant dies in California, and the second concerns the responses by immigrants when a family member dies in Africa. First, when an African immigrant dies in America, the family members are immediately faced with the expense of transporting the body back to Africa for burial. They are also faced with amassing the funds to cover the vast funerary expenses and travel arrangements for attending the funeral. In the event of a death of an African immigrant in America, the national, ethnic, and hometown associations play a key role in amassing the funds necessary to send the body back home. Most associations give a top priority in their by-laws for helping their membership with funeral expenses. In fact, some of the national and ethnic associations in Los Angeles were initiated as a result of an improperly performed funeral (see chapter three). Many people also

belong to burial societies, which collect regular dues specifically for funeral expenses in the event of a death in the family among the membership. If a family is unable to raise the funds necessary to transport the body, the deceased may have to be buried in the U.S., although this is typically considered a tragedy, especially if the person was an elder who died of natural causes. African immigrants place an immeasurable value on being buried at home in Africa. For many, such as the Akan, this practice is rooted in the belief that one must be buried in one's ancestral home in order to reunite with the ancestral spirits and become an ancestor oneself. This is important because ancestors continue to play an important role in the kinship network, overseeing and influencing the lives of the living.

Among Ghanaians, a funeral for a family member is often performed in multiple locations across the Diaspora. When a Ghanaian dies in America, the body is usually transported back to Ghana for burial services and celebrations. But whether or not the body is transported back, the surviving family members living abroad still perform a funeral ritual in America. If the body has been moved, then the funeral in America is performed in the absence of the deceased. Ghanaian Christian funeral ceremonies are usually held in a church and performed very much like a church service, with an emphasis on gospel songs, dancing, and prayers. The only difference is that the songs, prayers, sermon, and announcements are appropriate to a funeral and focus on consoling the family, praying blessings for the deceased, and collecting an offering for the family for their funeral expenses. If a Senegalese dies in America, the Senegal Association helps to raise the funds necessary to transport the body to Senegal, but there is no formal funeral service for the person in their absence. Rather,

association members go on visitations to the bereaved and offer their condolences and a contribution (sarakh).

In terms of the second scenario, Ghanaian and Senegalese immigrants have very different responses upon the death of a family member in Africa. If a Ghanaian immigrant loses a relative in Ghana, the surviving family members in the Diaspora often perform a symbolic wake keeping and funeral for the deceased. Just like the scenario above, these rituals are performed "as if" the deceased were present. Announcements of the funeral circulate among the community through flyers of obituaries that are mailed to the association membership and placed among other flyers at African-owned businesses such as restaurants and grocery stores (see Illustration). Among Ghanaian Christians, the wake keeping and funeral are held in a church and follow a program much like a typical church service, with gospel songs, prayers, a sermon, and a collection taken on behalf of the family (see Illustration). A funeral reception is often held at a reception hall or in the home of the bereaved. For Akan immigrants, the funeral reception represents the aspect of the funeral which is known as the final funeral rites (*ayie* or *ayie pa*). In Ghana, the ayie takes place after the burial service at the home of the bereaved family or in a large public space. It attracts several hundred or upwards of a thousand people and features an all-night party of dancing to traditional and popular music. Depending on the finances of the family and how much money they have been able to raise, hosts provide certain things to the guests in exchange for their attendance and their donation (nnsowa). Essentially, they all provide water for their guests as a formal gesture of hospitality. Many also provide soft drinks and alcoholic drinks, and some also give their guests snacks or even a full meal. Since it is culturally inappropriate to eat in

public at large events such as this, guests normally find an isolated spot to eat or else they have the hosts wrap up the dinner for them to take away.

In Southern California, a funeral reception attracts a few dozen to a hundred guests and also features music and dancing. Many of the hosts of diasporic funeral receptions also offer their guests drinks and a buffet dinner of traditional Ghanaian cuisine. The purpose of the funeral reception is to provide social and cultural bonding among immigrants and reinforce a sense of cultural identity. Funerals are primary source of camaraderie and cultural identity in the lives of Ghanaians. As one Asante immigrant expressed to me regarding the performance of funerals in the Diaspora, "We want to keep the tradition the same, maintain the tradition, to show you're not disconnected. These things give you your sense of identity, your uniqueness as an individual, defined by tradition" (1 April 2003, personal communication). The funeral ceremonies performed in the Diaspora in the absence of the deceased are opportunities for the family to memorialize the deceased and share the video and photographic images of the funeral rites with their friends and association members. The ceremonies allow the family members to entertain others in the community with music, dance, food, and drinks. This way, others in the community can feel as though they have attended the funeral rites, which in Ghana are grand social events. The second purpose for holding funeral receptions in the absence of the deceased involves fundraising. The absentee funerals are opportunities for the family members to collect donations towards the funeral expenses. Immigrants abroad are in a position of contributing a great amount towards the expense of a funeral. Therefore, these receptions often take place after the actual burial rites

have been performed in Ghana. The family collects financial contributions from the guests, records them in a book, and later sends out thank you cards.

A typical Akan immigrant funeral reception in the absence of the deceased is held at a rented reception hall or in one's home. The seats are arranged in a circular layout with the chairs and other furniture pushed against the walls. To open the ceremony, an elder of the family says a prayer and pours libations to the ancestors and wishes the deceased a safe journey to the afterworld. However, many Ghanaian Christians feel that pouring libations contradicts their Christian faith and thus, they adapt the libations ritual by pouring water or avoid the practice altogether (See the discussion in chapter four on the debate among Ghanaian Christians over pouring libations). As guests enter, they must shake hands with everybody in the room, starting from the right side and moving in a counter-clockwise direction. Not to shake hands with all the family and guests would be a major breach of conduct. The family members sit in state at a place of honor known as the "high table," which is sometimes on a raised platform.

The immediate family wears funerary cloth in symbolic styles and colors that are appropriate to the ethnic group. Men of the family wear the cloth (*ntoma*) slung over one shoulder and wrapped around the body. Women in the family have the cloth tailored into a traditional outfit of *kaba* (top), slit (skirt), and *akatasoø* (outer cloth wrap). In Asante culture, members of the immediate family wear black and red cloth. Black symbolizes death and ancestors, while red is the color of the *abusua*, or matrilineage. In Fante culture, the family wears either all black, which symbolizes mourning, or black and white cloth, which signifies victory for a person who has died of old age and will become an ancestor. The guests at the

funeral reception wear outfits made of funerary cloth, which is either all black or black and another dark color such as dark brown, dark red, or orange. Akan funerary cloth often includes a pattern of *adinkra* symbols. Adinkra is a form of iconography that represents proverbial sayings intended to communicate special sentiments in seeing off the dead.

After the formal introductions and testimonials by members of the immediate family and friends, the guests are entertained by the family with drinks, music, dancing, and sometimes a meal. In the Akan immigrant community, it is rare to find a traditional drumming group that is versed in funerary music and available to perform at family functions as they would in Ghana. More often, a family plays tapes or CDs on the stereo or hires a DJ to play music at the reception. The genres of music at the reception tend to follow a particular arc. In the early stages of the reception, a family plays traditional funerary music such as adowa or nnwomkoro. After the traditional music, the family plays popular highlife songs, including gospel highlife, for guests to dance until the early morning hours. Depending on the formality of the event, a group of Asante men and women from the Asante association may dance the traditional adowa dance in honor of the deceased.

Adowa refers to the drums, dances, and songs of the Akan funeral genre. The adowa drum ensemble consists of *adawura*, an iron banana-shaped bell; *apentemma,* a medium-sized drum with a round body and small pedestal with a goat skin attached by wooden tuning pegs; *petia*, a small cylindrical drum with a goat skin; and *donno*, a small hour-glass tension drum. The ensemble may also include the *atumpan*, a pair of large pedestal shaped drums, male and female, which produce drum language. The bell establishes a timeline pattern which the drums fit into with short, repetitive, interlocking rhythms. The adowa songs praise

the abusua, or the mother's side of the family, by calling the names of the parents, their ancestors, family line, and clan. The songs always begin with an invocation to God by exclaiming interchangeable names for the Supreme Being, "Øtwebiampon, Nyakropon." The adowa dance occurs in a slow processual movement with small groups of people encircling one main dancer who produces a number of graceful hand gestures which signify different aspects of grief and family loyalty. As the dancers process around the funeral arena, where guests are arranged in a wide circle, the guests respond to the dancers by extending the right arm with the first and second fingers extended, towards the dancers.

Nnwonkoro is a female song genre that uses the adowa drum ensemble as accompaniment (played by men) (see Ampene 2004 and Anyidoho 1994). Nnwonkoro performance consists of two main singing styles. It begins with an introductory section sung by a cantor in a recitative style in free rhythm to which the chorus of women responds "Hmmm" in harmony at the ends of the phrases. In this song section, which is short and not intended for dancing, the lead singer sets the mood and makes declamatory statements. After the introduction, a drummed announcement readies the drum ensemble and the bell player begins the timeline pattern for each instrument to find their entrance points. The main song section, which is intended for dancing, consists of several songs strung together over the same repetitive, interlocking drum accompaniment. The lead singer sings strophic songs in a pentatonic scale and a descending melody line. The melodic construction follows the bi-tonal speech patterns of Twi, an Akan compositional practice that is prevalent in traditional

music[23]. The chorus of women respond by joining and harmonizing at the beginning or middle of the following phrases. The varying timbres of iron, wood, skin, handclaps, and full, nasal voice qualities create a dense texture and sonic intensity. The song lyrics are dominated by themes of death and mourning, as evident in this example by the premier commercial nnwonkoro group, Nana Afua Abasa and Manhyia Tete Nnwonkoro, collected by Kwasi Ampene in his recent research of the genre (Ampene 2004).

Amoadum Densu ayiri me o Kwaw e,
Amoadum Densu ayiri me o Kwaw e,
Økøø akønomagya,
Økø tuu bankye e,
Økøø akønomoagya,
Økø tuu bankye øde a to nkwanta,
Ama obi abffa,
Nipa nua øde ama Nyame o,
Kwaw e.

Amoadum River Densu has drawn me
Amoadum River Densu has drawn me
He/she went to Akonomagya
To harvest cassava
He/she went to Akonomagya
To harvest cassava, he left it at the crossroads
For someone to steal it
Man's brother he has given it to God

[23] I credit J.H. Kwabena Nketia for information presented in the Traditional Compositional Techniques of

Kwaw e.

Senegalese immigrants, on the other hand, do not hold funerals for family members who have passed away in Africa. In the event that a Senegalese immigrant loses a loved one in Africa, members and officers of the Senegal Association and Senegal Women's Association of Southern California visit the bereaved and offer sarakh. Senegalese immigrants do not adhere to the formalized timeline of two days and seven days after death for their gatherings, owing to the constraints of time, long working hours, and great distance between neighborhoods in Southern California. Instead, individuals gather or visit when they are able and offer a sarakh to the bereaved. As in Senegal, these gatherings are characterized by a somber mood with no music or dancing. Because of the stark differences between the two groups in question – Ghanaian and Senegalese – in terms of the presence or absence of music and dancing during funeral rites, the ethnographic descriptions will focus on Ghanaian immigrants.

An Asante Funeral Reception in Fontana

In a house in Fontana, a suburb east of Los Angeles, a Ghanaian immigrant and his wife are hosting a funeral reception for his mother, who passed away in Ghana at the age of 88. The son has recently returned from Kumasi, where he attended his mother's funeral. He has brought back pictures and videotape to share with his friends, church members, and fellow association members. The reception is also an opportunity to collect donations from

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African Music course at the University of Ghana, Legon Fall 1993.

the community to help offset the expense of the funeral. I was invited to the funeral reception by a friend of the bereaved.

Approximately seventy-five guests come and go during the evening between 4:00 p.m. and midnight. Guests dressed in dark colors, such as black, brown, dark orange, and dark red, gather in the living room in chairs arranged against the walls around the perimeter of the room. As each person arrives, they shake hands and greet all the seated guests from right to left. To begin the ceremony, a friend of the family says an opening prayer. He then delivers a sermon and says another prayer. The bereaved son, dressed in a red adinkra cloth wrap, delivers a short testimonial about his mother. He talks about his family's background, including where they come from, where they were raised, and where they attended school. He introduces the names of his mother, father, his mothers' mother and father, and his mother's ten children. He says a little bit about each of his brothers and sisters, where they are around the world, what they are doing professionally, and whether they are married. He characterizes his mother's personality as very kind, wise, and supportive of all her children. But she was also strict and emphasized the importance of hard work. He welcomes all the guests to the party, asks them to enjoy themselves, enjoy the food, and sign the guest book so they can send thank you cards. He thanks his wife for her hard work in organizing this event and for preparing all the food along with some other women. Then, the man's good friend, dressed in a dark orange-brown cloth wrap, gives a short speech about how they met, how they have been good friends since secondary school in Ghana, and he reminds the guests that they should remember to contribute something to help with the funeral costs. A closing prayer ends this portion of the funeral reception.

Then, the group convenes in the den and adjacent kitchen to converse and give condolences to the family. The mood gradually crescendos from somber and still to lively and friendly, as people greet one another by slapping their palms together and shaking hands tightly, sometimes ending with a snap between the finger and thumb. Several of the women go into the garage to make last minute preparations on the large buffet of Ghanaian dishes arranged on long tables, including fufu and stew, rice and chicken, salad, sodas, beer, and wine. While the men publicly drink beer, some of the ladies sneak wine into their white styrofoam cups. In the den, a few people have stuffed themselves into the puffy black leather sofas and direct their attention toward the television. The son of the deceased has put on the video of his mother's actual funeral that took place in Kumasi. The sound of the video is muted as CDs of *adowa* songs play loudly on the stereo. Next to the television sits an easel with a large black and white poster print of the deceased as a middle-aged woman. The same poster print appears in the video of the funeral, during the church service and during the burial service. It occurs to me that the poster print, simultaneously here and there, manages to link the two events and manifest a transnational moment in time. Meanwhile, a friend of the family is videotaping the events of this funeral reception, creating an overlapping and circuitous process of recorded images.

The video of the funeral draws me in. Ladies in dark black dresses shuffle around a corpse dressed up as a bride in a white silk wedding dress and laid out on a bed in a small room. The ladies are wailing and waving their hands in grief. This is the wake keeping, where family members and friends grieve over the body that "lays in state." Many of the boys wear black T-shirts with the deceased woman's picture and her name on the front and the

words, "Da Yie" ("Sleep Well"), printed on the back. It is common practice to reproduce portrait images of the deceased in a variety of formats, including T-shirts, specially printed cloth made up into dresses and wraps, large poster prints of the deceased on easels, and donation cards with the deceased's picture on the front, which serve as receipts for contributions (De Witte 2003). The wake keeping begins on Friday night and usually lasts all night, although many families have begun doing the wake keeping on Saturday morning to accommodate travelers from out of town (De Witte 2003). As the finely "decorated" body lays on a bed in the center of specially prepared room in the house, family members and friends process around the body in a counter-clockwise direction. The women outwardly express their grief by crying, wailing, and singing, while the men quietly process around the body stoically taking in the image of their matron. It is considered inappropriate for men to cry at funerals, but it is highly desirable for women to cry and wail. In fact, professional wailers and cryers are sometimes hired at funerals to inspire others to show emotion and to present the impression of a good funeral (De Witte 2003). A pastor and singers from the church have also come to pray and sing hymns over the body.

In general, in Ghanaian funerals, singers and musicians who are versed in traditional funerary genres perform at the deceased's bedside during the wake keeping and at the burial service. The type of music at funerals is dependent on the ethnicity of the family. For example, adowa, kete, and nnwomkorø are performed among the Akan (see Kwasi Ampene 2004); agbadza, agbekor, and gadzo among the Ewe; bamaaya, takai, and jera among the Dagbamba (see John Miller Chernoff 1979); adowa songs and dances among the Ga-Adangbe (see Barbara Hampton 1981); and gyil (xylophone) music among the Dagaari. The

type of musicians at a funeral will also depend on the lineage (royal or otherwise) of the family and the religious orientation. Those of royal lineage will provide musicians linked to the house of the chief. For example, at the recent funeral in Accra for the mother of a Fante immigrant who lives in Los Angeles (described above), one of the daughters-in-law, who comes from a royal Akan lineage, provided an ensemble of kete drummers and dancers to perform during the final funeral rites at the family's compound. Bringing these royal court musicians to the funeral was her gift to the family, as the "in-laws," or wives of the immediate family, are expected to bring gifts. Aside from these traditional live musicians, there were also performances of Christian music at the wake keeping, church service, and burial service. Being that the family is Methodist, the pastor and members of the church sang hymns over the body at the wake keeping and two female choirs, or "singing bands," sang hymns and Akan Christian songs (*asare nnwom*) at the church service and the burial service. Additionally, on Sunday during the memorial service, a gospel band performed gospel songs at the church, which inspired family members to come forward and dance.

Back to the video, it is Saturday morning and guests have gone home to change for the religious service, which commences around 11:00 a.m. in the church. This ceremony has the structure of a regular religious service, with prayers, singing, dancing, and a sermon, but also features testimonials by family members and friends in honor of the deceased. After the religious service, the casket is carried in a procession to the cemetery for internment (*afunsie*). The bereaved family wears red cloth with adinkra symbols. The seemingly thousands of people attending the burial wear outfits made of black screenprint fabric with

dark adinkra symbols. Some of the women also wear the cloth wrapped around their bodies in the men's style.

At the cemetery, large tent-like tarps create a temporary roof over long rows of red plastic chairs, which are decorated with the insignia of *Gye Nyame* ("Except God"). The guests go around and shake hands with the seated bereaved family and the other guests. Then, all attention is turned towards the grave site as several men peel back the paper covering of a large box to reveal the brand new exquisite casket. They open the casket door and allow the video camera to pan across and caress the white puffy satin interior for a long while. The men hoist the woman's body inside the coffin and then add several puffy satin pillows under her head. Family members diligently place items inside the casket which the grandmother will need on her journey to the afterworld, including money, cloth, gold rings, and gold necklaces. They lower the casket into the clean rectangular hole in the ground, and place huge plastic heart-shaped wreaths of flowers covered in plastic wrapping. With wreaths fully covering the casket, the men add shovelfuls of dirt and begin the process of filling the grave.

When the video reaches the part in the burial service where the guests are singing hymns, the man in Fontana turns down the CD and turns up the sound on the video for guests to hear the singing. He keeps the volume high during the final funeral rites as a live adowa group performs and a DJ plays highlife music for the hundreds of guests to dance. It is evident that the music is an aspect of the funeral that the son wishes to broadcast to his guests. The final funeral rites (ayie) takes place at the family compound on Saturday night. This event provides a social context for celoebratory expressions in contrast to the

expressions of grief and mourning exemplified during the wake keeping and burial services. The event is an opportunity for people to cut loose and dance, drink, and enjoy each other's company. The ceremony features both live traditional music in the form of an adowa ensemble and nnwomkoro singing group, as well as popular highlife music played by a DJ. In Ghana, this event can last all night and guests are even known to continue the party at nightclubs following the final funeral rites (De Witte 2003). The next morning brings the Thanksgiving ceremony, which is held outdoors at the family compound. Again, the seats are arranged in long rows in a circular pattern. The bereaved family wears black and white adinkra cloth to symbolize victory. The Sunday morning event features prayers, speeches, and dancing to recorded music of adowa and highlife. At the conclusion of the video, the son turns the volume back up on the stereo and switches to a cassette of highlife music.

Overall, there was a warm and friendly atmosphere at the funeral reception at the couple's home in Fontana. Guests enjoyed each other's company as they talked and laughed with one another. They responded positively to the music that played in the background. However, dancing was never an organized activity, but occurred more in spontaneous spurts. There was no area of the house that was designated as a dance floor, like in many other Ghanaian ceremonies I have attended. However, guests would dance in place for a short duration of time whenever they felt moved. For example, while adowa music played on the CDs and during the video of the funeral, some of the ladies would break out into an adowa dance briefly, while the other ladies laughed and smiled and made positive comments. The main activities by the guests involved visiting, eating, drinking, listening to music, and

viewing the videotape at their leisure, which allowed people to feel as though they had attended the funeral, according to the host.

A Kwawu Wake Keeping in Downtown Los Angeles

The members of Labor for Christ Ministry, a small Ghanaian immigrant Pentecostal church, are hosting a funeral service for their pastor's mother, who died in Ghana two and a half months earlier at the age of 73. The church members and others from the community have gathered on a Friday evening in February of 2004 in the small loft space in downtown Los Angeles, which serves as their church sanctuary. An obituary announcing the death of the pastor's mother serves as a flyer for the event. The obituary includes an announcement of the woman's death with a picture of her as a middle aged woman and the date of her passing. It also includes an invitation to the wake keeping at the church on Friday night and the reception at a middle school on Saturday night. At the bottom, the obituary lists the chief mourners (members of the immediate family) and their city or country of residence, including Ghana, London, Canada, and Los Angeles. The obituary itself illustrates the transnational character of contemporary Ghanaian funerals. With members of the immediate and extended family scattered about the globe, the funeral of an Akan woman in Ghana takes on global proportions as the family members in different countries each perform symbolic funeral ceremonies and raise funds to help finance the actual funeral in Ghana.

I was invited to the wake keeping by my drum teacher, Kwashi Amevuvor. He was asked by the organizers of the ceremony to come and play hand drums with the "praise team," or gospel band, and has brought me along to play drumset. I was struck by the irony

that the ceremony was promoted as a wake keeping, which is traditionally the part of the funeral at which the body is laid in state while mourners process around the corpse, singing and expressing their grief. However, since this wake keeping is being performed in the absence of the deceased, there is no body, and the printed program is more reminiscent of a Pentecostal church service, outlining a service of prayers, scripture reading, singing, and religious oratory. Guests are not seated in a circle or against the walls, as is typical of funeral ceremonies, but rather in chairs arranged in rows in the small converted church. The guests are dressed in black and other dark colors. Some wear the traditional funerary outfits, but most are dressed in black outfits that would be considered appropriate church attire, such as suits or slacks and shirts on the men, and dresses or dress slacks on the women.

Although the obituary announcement lists the program as running from 7:00 p.m. to 1:00 a.m., most of the guests do not arrive until 9:30 p.m. or later, in "African time." Eventually, a man comes to the front of the sanctuary and welcomes the crowd with an opening prayer. I join the keyboardist and bass guitarist on the raised platform stage and Kwashi stands off to the side behind the pair of congas. Three singers, a Ghanaian man and woman and a Latin American woman holding her small child, stand in front of the stage with microphones. I don't have time to adjust the drumset, which is large and very much out of my reach. And not knowing the set list, I depend on the keyboardist and bassist, who refer to their penciled list of songs, to begin each song and I quickly jump in after determining the meter. Since I have been playing drums for another Ghanaian immigrant Pentecostal church for the last several months, I am familiar with the basic song selections and am aware of the two basic genres which include "worship" songs and "praise" songs. In the Pentecostal canon,

worship songs are hymns or contemporary gospel compositions played in slow ballad style. They are intended to encourage quiet, meditative, and passionate responses by worshippers. Praise songs are lively and upbeat renditions of gospel songs, hymns, and other religious songs. Many Ghanaian gospel groups play these songs strictly in highlife style, with a syncopated pattern over a straight four pulse in the bass drum and bass guitar. This funeral program begins with a set of worship songs. The band plays some of them in slow ballad style and some in slow reggae style. Members of the congregation respond to the worship songs by swaying broadly and extending their arms to the ceiling with open palms. Some people close their eyes and collectively mumble their prayers.

After about forty-five minutes of worship songs, there is a break in the music and a man comes forward to pray aloud. Afterwards, he introduces the family members, who are seated at the high table at the right side of the sanctuary. Then the band begins playing again, this time, in the style of praise songs. Their renditions are exclusively in a fast highlife style with a steady 4/4 bass drum and bass guitar pattern and a syncopated soca-type pattern in the keyboard, which is accentuated by the snare drum. The songs are short and repetitive, which makes it easy for the congregation to sing along. Members of the congregation respond to the praise songs physically and energetically by standing, clapping, swaying, playing tambourines, and stepping the four-pulse ground rhythm with their feet. Two or three ladies come forward and dance in the space between the front row and the podium at the edge of the stage area. They step out the even pulse with a left-right shuffling foot pattern, moving in a counter-clockwise circular motion. With their elbows bent, their bodies bent slightly forward at the waist, and smiling, they dance slowly and steadily around the imaginary circle.

Occasionally, they will raise their torsos and stretch the arms out and look up the sky with looks of pleasure. Others step, clap, and sing while standing in front of their seats or in the aisle. One woman who is dancing in the space at the front of the sanctuary suddenly becomes anointed with the Holy Spirit and falls to her knees and begins shaking all over. Others around her continue their dancing, swaying and clapping. The woman prostrates herself on the ground, then crawls to the chair in the front row and grasps the chair for support as she shakes and eventually hunches over the chair, completely drained. She remains there for several minutes as the loud music continues. After a while, she rises enough to put herself in the chair and she slumps over, barely audibly mumbling a prayer.

After playing for about an hour and a half with the band, the drumset, which is still stretching my limbs in all directions, has taken its toll on my muscles, not to mention the snare drum stand, which continues to bend forward in the middle of playing. I'm tired and sore and I get the feeling that I am becoming a liability. Fortunately, during a break in the set, the pastor's wife comes and tells me that the pastor wants the drums to be louder and she takes over playing for me. When the band starts back up, I can see just how loudly they want the drumming. She plays a tremendously loud syncopated highlife pattern in unison on the snare and hi-hat while playing a hard and solid four-on-the-floor pattern on the bass drum. Her drumming creates a sonic wash of sound and drives the rhythm of the highlife praise songs. It becomes clear to me that simplicity and volume are the valued components of the praise songs, because they are intended to prompt the response such as the lady above has just experienced. The sonic intensity is meant to encourage the Holy Spirit to come down and inhabit the worshipper, much like a prophet healer or initiate would be induced to trance in a

traditional African trance or spirit possession ritual performance (see Gilbert Rouget 1985). And even though this program is not a Pentecostal service *per se*, the Pentecostal aesthetics and accompanying spiritual experience are mapped onto the traditional ritual of the wake keeping by nature of the space in which the ritual takes place and the expectations of the believers.

After a long set of praise songs, there is a break in the music for oral presentations. However, each Bible reading, sermon, and testimonial is buffered by the performance of another song. First, a reverend reads a scriptural passage, which is followed by a congregational song. Then, an evangelist delivers a sermon to the crowd, which is followed by a solo performance by a woman with playback tape accompaniment. Next, a man presents a biography of the woman's life history. At one point, he says that the Kwawu (the ethno-linguistic group of the family) are considered the "Jews of Ghana" because they are so good at business and making money. After the biography, another gentleman presents a tribute by relating some of his personal remembrances of the deceased. At one point, he comments that this wake keeping is different by Ghanaian standards, because normally at a Ghanaian wake keeping, people would be drunk by now. But here in the immigrant community, this church has done away with drinking at funerals. He goes on to explain that the church's policy is based on the belief that the act of mourning, that is, outwardly emoting, wailing, or drinking to excess, should be seen as an indication that those individuals do not believe in Christ. He says that if you believe that a person who dies is going straight to Heaven, then you will not have to mourn for them. This policy and evaluation by the church either represents a twist on a traditional Akan aesthetic mode of celebrating the life of a deceased person, or emboldens a

Christian prohibition of engaging in traditional performance practices that are considered antithetical to Christian beliefs. Overall, it represents the ongoing negotiation of traditional practices and Christian beliefs in a context which has both Christian and traditional components.

After the oral presentations, the ushers take up a collection for the family's funeral expenses. A basket is placed at the front of the sanctuary and as the praise team plays an upbeat praise song, the guests form a line down the center aisle and dance forward, clutching their donations in their fists. As each person approaches the basket, they discreetly drop their donation into the basket and dance back to their seats. Then the praise team plays another set of exuberant praise songs in highlife style and the guests dance until midnight. At the night's end, the master of ceremonies invites everyone to attend the funeral reception the following evening at a middle school. He explains that it is well known that people in the Ghanaian community are not always able to attend all the events because of work constraints, but he implores them to attend and show their support for the family. Then everyone disperses into the cool night.

Conclusion

More than any other lifecycle event, funerals connect immigrants with their families at home and throughout the Diaspora. With more and more people disbursing to North America and Europe, African funerals have become increasingly transnational and multi-sited affairs. My research in this area has explored three main avenues through which to view funeral ceremonies as transnational for Ghanaians and Senegalese. These avenues include the

flow of financial contributions by immigrants, the negotiation of music and dance with religious beliefs in the practice of funeral rituals, and the circulation of videotaped images across the Diaspora for raising the status of extended families.

Like most Africans living abroad, Ghanaian and Senegalese immigrants in Southern California are key contributors in the production of funerals in their home countries through their financial remittances. Garnering funds for funerals are regular activities among African immigrants because of the strong kinship bonds and familial responsibilities that continue even after people migrate abroad. The African national, ethnic, and hometown associations and burial societies are major organizing forces for pulling together the financial resources for the funerals of its membership and their families.

In Ghana, funerals have become increasingly commercialized over the last twenty or so years. Indeed, more than weddings or naming ceremonies, the funeral is the most expensive and elaborate lifecycle ritual in society and requires massive fundraising. In Ghana, the move towards more elaborate funeral finery is evident in the burgeoning funeral industry. More than ever before, people are making their living by providing crafts and services for funerals. Among these is the growing fantasy coffin trade, a trend among the Ga people of the coastal region in and around Accra which involves custom ordered, hand-carved, brightly painted coffins which depict the work or personality of the deceased. Ga craftspeople build wooden coffins in the shapes of animals such as chickens, leopards, or fish, objects that represent the career of the deceased such as boats, cars, or tools, or items of value to the deceased such as Bibles or houses (see Secretan 1995).

Beyond the financial aspect of funerals as a transnational process, my research also views funerals as transnational events at the level of performance and cultural identity. In terms of performance practice, Ghanaian and Senegalese immigrants approach funeral rituals with remarkably different perceptions and cultural practices. For Ghanaians, such as the Akan immigrants presented in this chapter, music and dance structure and frame the events of each segment of the funeral ritual, which can span several days and extend to a year after death. However, among Senegalese, a deeply Muslim identity prescribes a complete absence of music, dance, or celebration during a funeral rite. For this reason, I chose to focus on Ghanaian, and specifically Akan, immigrant funeral ceremonies in Southern California.

I focused mainly on the ways in which Ghanaian Christians negotiate and adapt their traditional rites and musical performances with their Christian faith and practices. In some cases, traditional rites and musical styles are avoided or kept separate from Christian activities. Sometimes, the traditional and Christian genres are alternated during funeral performances. For example, at the Fante funeral held in Ghana, traditional music, such as the asafo horn and drum was alternated with Christian hymn singing at the wake keeping. The daughter of the deceased, a devout Methodist, was not pleased with the appearance of the "fetish" instruments, but she had to abide by the family's decision to include them (15 March 2005, personal communication). In other cases, aspects of traditional music and Christian music are adapted and merged to form a hybrid style deemed appropriate for funerals. Still in other cases, performance practices that have roots in traditional Ghanaian religious performance are adapted into the Christian context during funeral services. This is evident in

the wake keeping at the Los Angeles church at which the women became anointed with the Holy Spirit and went into a momentary trance-like state while dancing to the praise songs.

Third, the transnational dynamic of funerals is bolstered through the circulation of videotaped images across the Diaspora. Videos of funerals, wake keepings, and receptions should be interpreted with the same approach as videos of naming ceremonies and wedding receptions. Videotapes of funerals in Africa and the Diaspora help to inform people on both continents of aesthetic values associated with funerals. They transmit people's knowledge and styles of performance practices. They reinforce cultural identity and contribute to an ongoing dialogue and mutual support between members of extended families and ethnic and national communities. Videos of the funeral rituals performed in the Ghanaian Diaspora, which are often considered status events, also help to increase the status and prestige of extended families. And videos can even affect change and transformation in the performance practices of funerals on both continents.

Final Conclusions

This dissertation has explored the performance practices and transnational strategies by a generation of Ghanaian and Senegalese immigrants in Southern California as they make critical choices in performing their rituals and celebrations of the lifecycle. I have integrated three channels in the analysis: the flows of money, the circulation of videotaped media, and musical performance practices which index specific complexes of local identity and privilege deeply significant features of African cultural identity, especially through repetition and circular formations. These three channels – performance, money, and media – allow

Ghanaian and Senegalese immigrants to continue building relationships based on kinship obligations and kinship-based identity, while simultaneously adding new stories to their families' biographies and situating their new place in the global sphere.

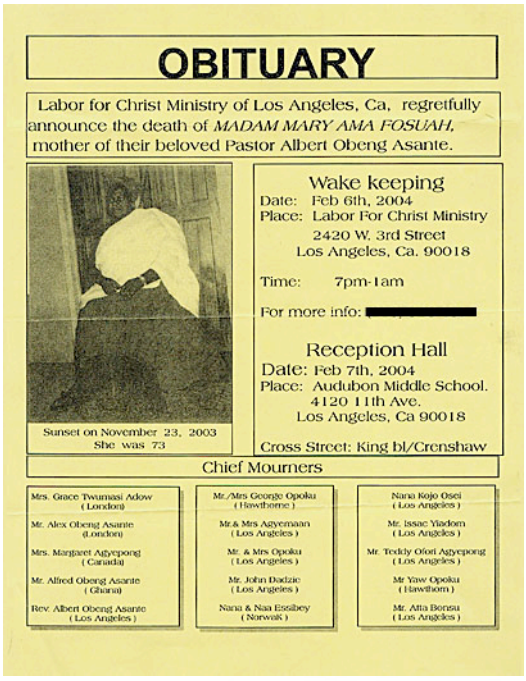
Flows of money through remittances are part of the process of reciprocal responsibility within families. Among Ghanaians, family members often sponsor a member of the family to emigrate and study at an American university, with the expectation that upon securing gainful employment, the person will send regular remittances back to the family to help fund daily needs and elaborate lifecycle rituals. Among Senegalese, Mouride traders branch out to American cities to build their trade networks and have more cash and western luxury items to send back to their families in Senegal. The increasing outflow of Senegalese men has produced major shifts in the domestic sphere, as women have come to control the money involved in producing lifecycle events, as well as having developed an elaborate system of credit and debt through a ritualized form of gift exchange (Buggenhagen 2003).

Flows of media in the form of videotapes of family rituals and celebrations in Africa and abroad accentuate and reproduce the links between families across the Atlantic. Ghanaian and Senegalese immigrants have incorporated videos into their traditional and religious rites in recent years and are using this media technology to their advantage. A preliminary analysis of videotapes in this ethnography considers both the coded aspects of the content through the choices made by videographers in framing the subject, editing, and adding music to the videos, and the mediation process, or the work that videos do in the context of the respective cultures. I argue that videos of family ceremonies act as stand-ins for experience and invitations to join the circle of performance.

And finally, the music and dance performances during family ceremonies such as baptisms, weddings, and funerals, accentuate the family ties and act as creative sources in identity construction for Ghanaian and Senegalese immigrants, who are in many ways, living in "both" and "between" African and American spaces. The family rituals that people perform in the Diaspora are in no way exact replicas of the ceremonies at home, due to the cultural context and constraints of the host society. Thus, immigrants adapt their music and dance practices during rituals but at the same time, resist assimilating to the dominant society and actively Africanize the given spaces with their own music and dancing. The transnational cycle, therefore, is creatively adapted and edited along the way and new identities are made. Like the *orobous* symbol of the snake swallowing its own tail or the *sankofa* figure of the bird looking over its shoulder to learn from hindsight, this ending, for me, represents a new beginning for learning and discovering and making new connections.

Figure 35. At a Fante wake keeping in Ghana, the corpse lays in state dressed in a white wedding gown.
Figure 36. An asafo hornblower and drummer play an hommage to the deceased using their instruments in the speech surrogate mode. (photos courtesy Abba Maccani)

Figure 37. At the Fante wake keeping in Ghana, church members sing hymns in Twi over the body as it lays in state. Figure 38. At the funeral, a kete drum ensemble performs as the “in-laws” bring in gifts. (photos courtesy Abba Maccani)



OBITUARY

Labor for Christ Ministry of Los Angeles, Ca, regretfully announce the death of *MADAM MARY AMA FOSUAH,* mother of their beloved Pastor Albert Obeng Asante.

Sunset on November 23, 2003
She was 73

Wake keeping
Date: Feb 6th, 2004
Place: Labor For Christ Ministry
2420 W. 3rd Street
Los Angeles, Ca. 90018

Time: 7pm-1am

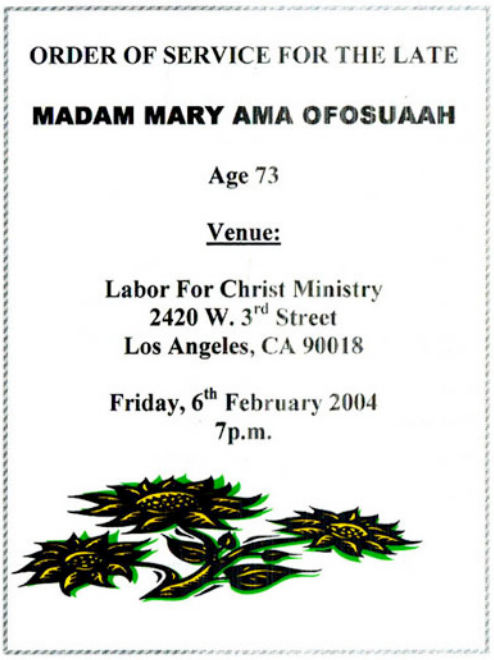
For more info: [redacted]

Reception Hall
Date: Feb 7th, 2004
Place: Audubon Middle School.
4120 11th Ave.
Los Angeles, Ca 90018

Cross Street: King bl/Crenshaw

Chief Mourners

Mrs. Grace Twumasi Adow (London)	Mr./Mrs George Opoku (Hawthorne)	Nana Kojo Osei (Los Angeles)
Mr. Alex Obeng Asante (London)	Mr.& Mrs Agyemaan (Los Angeles)	Mr. Issac Yiadom (Los Angeles)
Mrs. Margaret Agyepong (Canada)	Mr. & Mrs Opoku (Los Angeles)	Mr. Teddy Ofori Agyepong (Los Angeles)
Mr. Alfred Oberg Asante (Ghana)	Mr. John Dadzie (Los Angeles)	Mr Yaw Opoku (Hawthorn)
Rev. Albert Obeng Asante (Los Angeles)	Nana & Naa Essibey (Norwalk)	Mr. Atta Bonsu (Los Angeles)



ORDER OF SERVICE FOR THE LATE

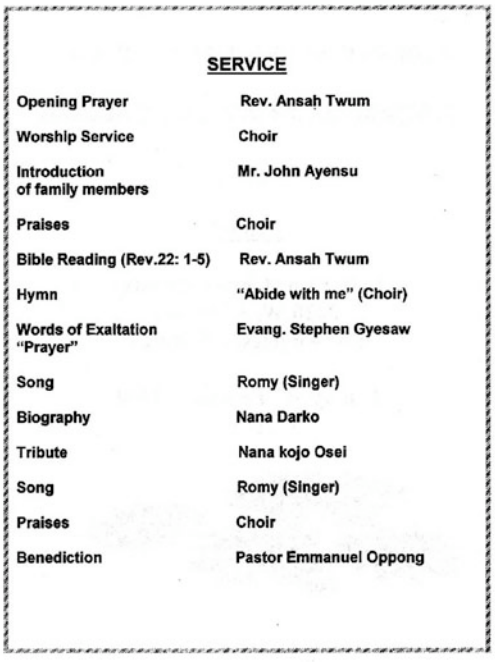
MADAM MARY AMA OFOSUAAH

Age 73

Venue:

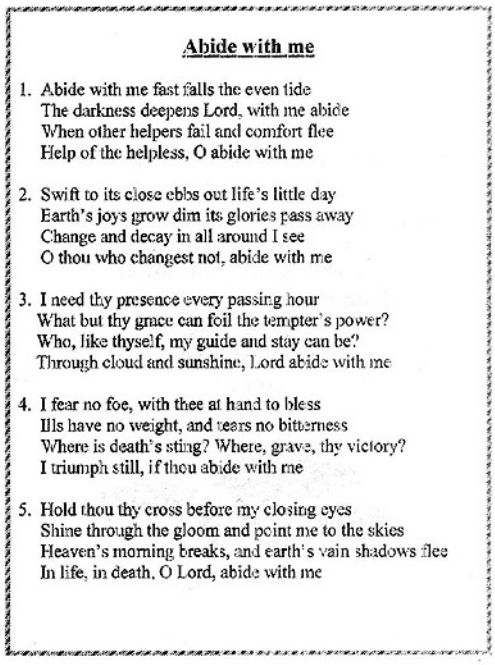
Labor For Christ Ministry
2420 W. 3rd Street
Los Angeles, CA 90018

Friday, 6th February 2004
7p.m.



SERVICE

Opening Prayer	Rev. Ansah Twum
Worship Service	Choir
Introduction of family members	Mr. John Ayensu
Praises	Choir
Bible Reading (Rev.22: 1-5)	Rev. Ansah Twum
Hymn	"Abide with me" (Choir)
Words of Exaltation "Prayer"	Evang. Stephen Gyesaw
Song	Romy (Singer)
Biography	Nana Darko
Tribute	Nana kojo Osei
Song	Romy (Singer)
Praises	Choir
Benediction	Pastor Emmanuel Oppong



Abide with me

1. Abide with me fast falls the even tide
The darkness deepens Lord, with me abide
When other helpers fail and comfort flee
Help of the helpless, O abide with me

2. Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day
Earth's joys grow dim its glories pass away
Change and decay in all around I see
O thou who changest not, abide with me

3. I need thy presence every passing hour
What but thy grace can foil the tempter's power?
Who, like thyself, my guide and stay can be?
Through cloud and sunshine, Lord abide with me

4. I fear no foe, with thee at hand to bless
Ills have no weight, and tears no bitterness
Where is death's sting? Where, grave, thy victory?
I triumph still, if thou abide with me

5. Hold thou thy cross before my closing eyes
Shine through the gloom and point me to the skies
Heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee
In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me

Figure 39. Obituary for the mother of a Ghanaian immigrant. Figure 40, 41, 42 (L to R). Order of Service at the wake keeping for the mother of a Ghanaian immigrant, progam cover, order of service, and lyrics to a hymn.

Figure 43. At a wake keeping in Los Angeles for the mother of a Ghanaian immigrant who was buried in Ghana, the praise team performs worship songs and praise songs. Figure 44. At the wake keeping in Los Angeles, guests dance and sing to the praise songs.

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